

THE HOTTEST
ALT GIRLS IN
ONE MAGAZINE

JESSICALOU • VALIS V

MARIE & ROUGE • ALEXA WEBB

ISSUE 91 • FREE

FEATURING

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL
COMEBACK KID
FOUR YEAR STRONG
THE BLACK DAHLIA
MURDER
COUNTERPARTS
AND MORE

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DANI DIVINE

#91

PLUS GAMING

DISSIDIA FINAL FANTASY NT
SOLSTICE CHRONICLES: MIA
STARCRRAFT REMASTERED
MARIO + RABBITOS:
KINGDOM BATTLE
SONIC MANIA
GAMER GIRL: SALISS

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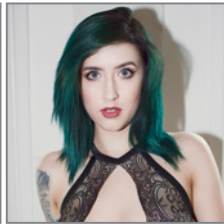
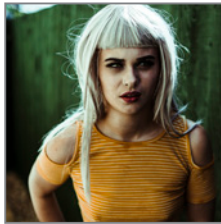
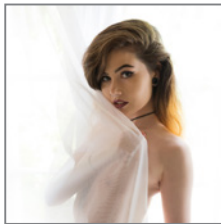
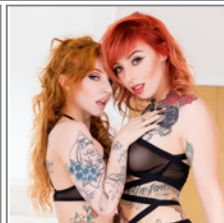
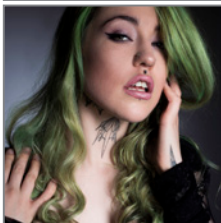




DANI DIVINE

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PHOTOGRAPHER: JACK RUSSELL @JACKRUSSELL_PHOTO
MODEL: ROUGE SUICIDE @SHOWMEYOURTITCH

A close-up portrait of a young woman with long, wavy, light-colored hair. She is wearing bright red lipstick and has a silver lip ring in her lower lip. She has a black geometric tattoo on her neck. She is wearing a black lace top with a zipper. The background is dark with blue and red lighting effects.

Photographer: ATOM

STEVIE DAGG

www.eliteonlinemag.com

09



Hey Stevie! Welcome back to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Hey y'all! I'm Stevie Dagg, a 25 year old little Yorkshire fireball, full of tattoos and positive vibes. I work within the tattoo community and I'm full time at a shop called Scorpio Tattoo. I pierce and laser and generally annoy the rest of the guys there, all while making an awesome brew.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? This was the first time it's just been ATOM shooting me and it was such a treat! I owe everything to do with my modelling career so far to the Elite team and have been dying to do some of the cool colour shots me and him managed to create together! (I say create, I just kinda stood there and tried to look moody sexy, if you get me haha)

What was your favourite part of the shoot? With each shoot I've done I've felt more and more confident in front of the camera, therefore I'd say my favourite part was having a laugh and us just trying out different poses to see what worked best to get the best shot.





IF YOU COULD TAKE US TO ANY FESTIVAL, WHICH WOULD IT BE AND WHY? STEVIE F
A NUTSHELL, SOMEONE IN MY FAMILY OWNS SOME LAND AND ME AND MY BEST FR
WE SETUP A FEW TENTS, FAIRY LIGHTS, BEERS, BBQ, GET A GENERATOR AND PLAY
TONNE SACK WHICH WE ATTACHED TO THE CAR AND WENT FOR

IF YOU COULD LISTEN TO ONE
ALBUM FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE,
WHAT WOULD IT BE? THE FUGEES
ALBUM 'THE SCORE'



EST. NOW I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO KNOW THAT FESTIVAL BUT IT'S AWESOME HA. IN
RIENDS HAVE GONE CAMPING ON IT FOR MY BIRTHDAY AND NAMED IT 'STEVIE FEST'.
MUSIC, HAVE A FIRE PIT AND ROAST MARSHMALLOWS, OH AND WE ALSO FOUND A
A LITTLE RIDE AROUND THE FIELD. THAT'S MY KINDA FESTIVAL.





What's your favourite part of your body and why? Bum. Always. It's the one part that always stays big no matter what everywhere else looks like :)

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? Naww c'mon now, you know this question makes me go shy.

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? Adidas. Always will be a dream of mine to be the coolest Yorkshire gal knocking about in my full fly Adidas track suits.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? HUGE. I feel like his year has thrown a hell of a lot at me, good and bad, but the good has always been 100000000x better than the bad, therefore 2017 has rocked so far!

What do you like most about Elite? How friendly everyone is and the fact that little old me gets lovely compliments from girls who I 'fan girl' over. Although the modelling community can be a little catty and I tend to stay away from anything like that, all the Elite models I have met and spoke with have been so lovely and juts want to big each other up which is ace.





Photographer: ATOM

WHAT'S A GUARANTEED TURN ON FOR YOU? MAKE A DEN WITH ME AND MAKE ME LAUGH. OR TELL ME SOME STRANGE FACTS :)

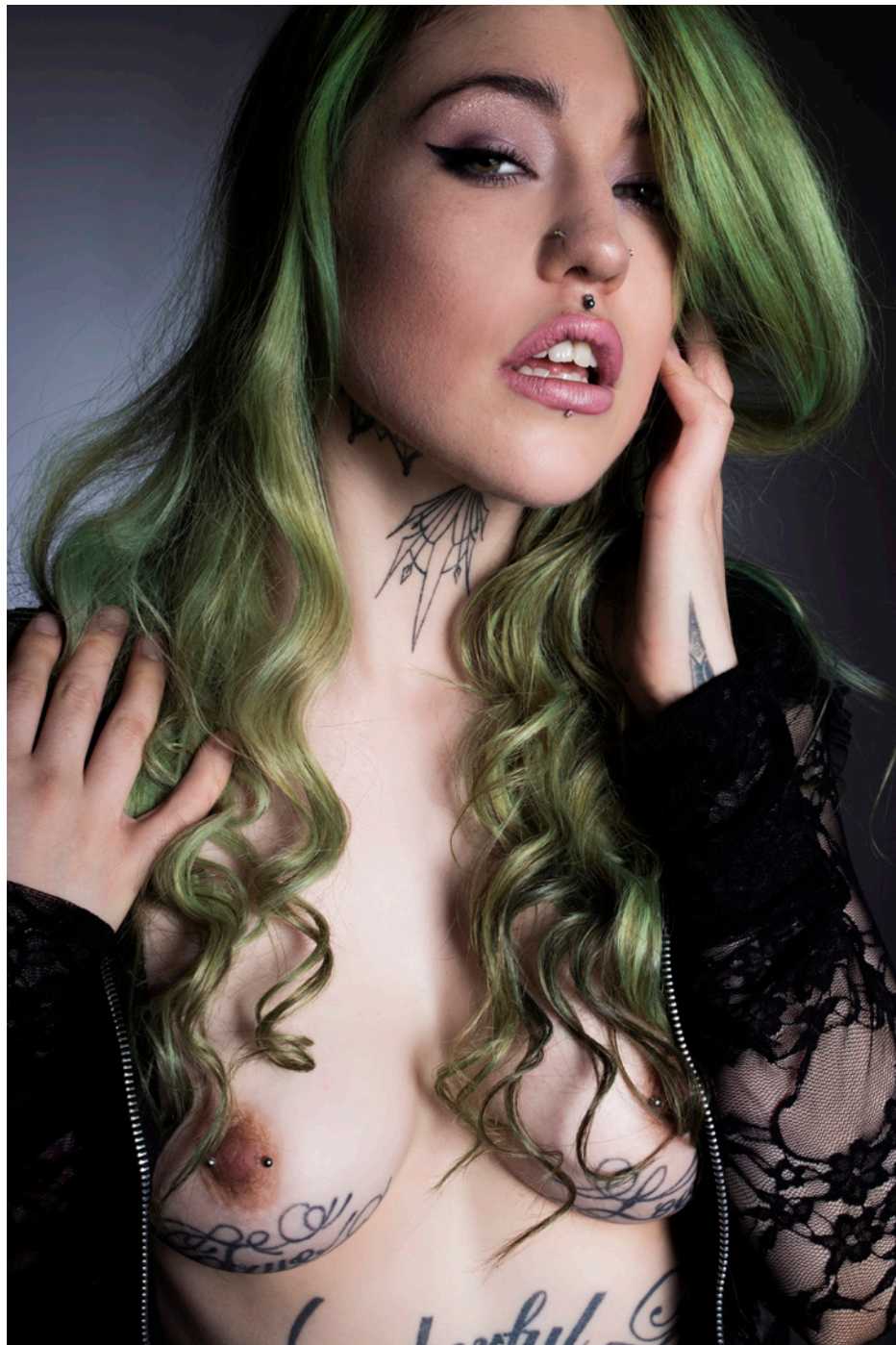


What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? I know it's cheating but I'm going to say Neapolitan.... I know it's not just one flavour, but then I can be greedy and eat all 3!

What's your favourite song currently? So there's always new songs flying around but for me, I'm actually diggin 'Don't worry be happy' by Bob Marley. I know it's not a new song but I've been listening to it every morning on my walk to work and it really makes me smile. I do however look crazy walking down the street just grinning like the Cheshire Cat at everyone.

Describe your perfect photoshoot: Apocalyptic... the world has ended and there's this one bad ass bitch left.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Amsterdam Amsterdam Amsterdam! I know that's not very adventurous, but I've been around 6 times now and I'd happily move there tomorrow, it's just me :)





FINALLY, IS THERE
ANYTHING YOU
WOULD LIKE TO
SAY TO THE ELITE
READERS? ALWAYS
REMEMBER THERE
IS A BRIGHTSIDE TO
EVERY SITUATION <3



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CAITLIN TAYLOR

Photographer: Tristan Manas





Hey Caitlin! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Hey Elite! I'm 23 and I'm a property manager who loves pasta!

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? It was one of the funniest shoots I've ever been on, it was around 10 degrees outside and I did jumping jacks to warm up!

What was your favourite part of the shoot? Probably covering myself as all the people walked past at the park haha!

What's your favourite part of your body and why? My eyes, they're seductive.





**WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST
ABOUT ELITE? I'D HAVE TO SAY
I LOVE THE DIVERSITY OF THE
WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE
MAGAZINE. EVERY WOMEN
DISPLAYS A DIFFERENT IDEA
OF BEAUTIFUL.**

Photographer: Tristan Manas





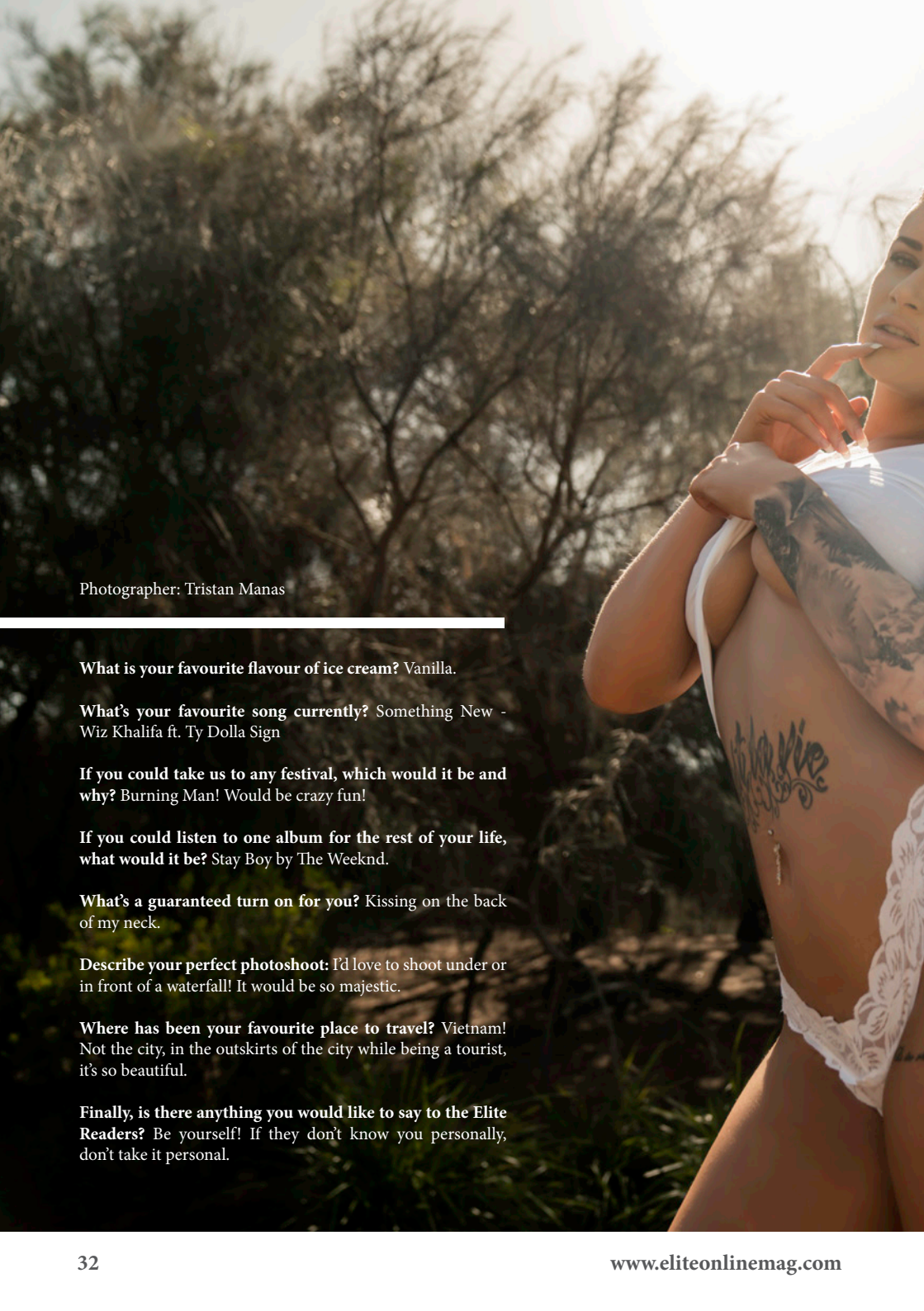
On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? 12/10. How humble haha!

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? Honey Birdette! I should buy shares in that company that way I can get all my money back.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? I've loved 2017 so much. I've had so many doors close to make room for bigger and better opportunities.





A woman with extensive tattoos on her arms and torso is shown from the waist up, wearing a white lace-trimmed top. She is looking upwards and to the right, with her hand near her chin. The background is a soft-focus sunset scene with silhouettes of trees.

Photographer: Tristan Manas

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Vanilla.

What's your favourite song currently? Something New - Wiz Khalifa ft. Ty Dolla Sign

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Burning Man! Would be crazy fun!

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? Stay Boy by The Weeknd.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? Kissing on the back of my neck.

Describe your perfect photoshoot: I'd love to shoot under or in front of a waterfall! It would be so majestic.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Vietnam! Not the city, in the outskirts of the city while being a tourist, it's so beautiful.

Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite Readers? Be yourself! If they don't know you personally, don't take it personal.







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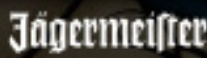
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EVERY SATURDAY

10:30PM - 3:00AM

THE ASYLUM VENUE



Jessica Lou

Photographer: ATOM



Hey JessicaLou! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: I love cats, traveling, Buffy Summers and getting my kit off in front of a camera.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? It was really fun to shoot with ATOM, he's always a babe.

What was your favourite part of the shoot? Bossing him around! Haha joke! I loved that I got to travel and see a new city for the first time.

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? I can't find my scales, I'll have to answer that some other time.

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Bubble gum.

What's your favourite song currently? Any song by The Weeknd.

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Download, we could mosh together and eat festival noodles!

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? Can I just watch Buffy?

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? ;)

Where has been your favourite place to travel? USA.

What do you like most about Elite? All the sexy ladies.

Photographer: ATOM





**IF YOU COULD MODEL FOR
ANY BRAND, PRODUCT
OR COMPANY, WHICH
WOULD IT BE AND WHY?
PLAYBOY. RIP HEFF <3**





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Photographer: ATOM

**2017 HAS BEEN A PRETTY BIG
YEAR FOR MANY PEOPLE. HOW
HAVE YOU FOUND IT SO FAR?
'THE YEAR OF JUST REALIZING
STUFF' - KYLIE JENNER, HAHA.**





WHAT'S YOUR
FAVOURITE PART
OF YOUR BODY AND
WHY? MY BOOBS. I
JUST LIKE BOOBS.





FINALLY, IS THERE
ANYTHING YOU WOULD
LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE
READERS? HOPE YOU
LIKE MY FEATURE. SEE
YOU AGAIN SOON <3



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ROUGE

SIAN MARIE

Photographer: Joseph O'Brien



HI ROUGE, WELCOME
TO ELITE! HOW DID YOU
ENJOY THE SHOOT?
HEY! I DON'T THINK I'VE
EVER NOT HAD A BLAST
WITH THE ELITE TEAM!

WHAT WAS IT LIKE
TO WORK WITH THE
PHOTOGRAPHER ON
THIS SHOOT? I LOVE
JOSEPH TO PIECES,
HE'S SO EASY TO WORK
WITH. A REAL GEM.





WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO WORK WITH SIAN? I MEAN SHE HAS A GREAT PAIR OF... EYES. SHE WAS A LOT OF FUN, WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWING EACH OTHER FOR YEARS, SO IT WAS NICE TO FINALLY MOTOBOAT HER. I MEAN MEET HER OF COURSE.



Photographer: Joseph O'Brien

What's Sian's best feature? That peachy little butt.

What's your best feature? Left eyebrow, it's the dominant one.

What was the funniest thing to happen at the shoot? 'Just wipe the crotch with a wet wipe and it's fine'.





PHOTOGRAPHER: JOSEPH O'BRIEN

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions? My Warlock on Destiny 2.

So how can a guy impress you? Juggle fire whilst unicycling over a tightrope.

Who has been your favourite model of 2017? Sithis.

What is the naughtiest thing you've done? Use my phone in a pub quiz.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? A good credit rating.

Beards - Yes or No? No.

What's the worst idea you have ever had? Let an ex tattoo me in my bedroom.

Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite readers? I don't like bacon.







**Hi Sian, welcome to Elite!
How did you enjoy the shoot?**

Hey Elite, I loved it! It was so awesome to get together with lots of passionate creatives and create awesomeness, all the ladies were FIYA also so obviously that helped things.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot?

Joseph is a truly lovely guy with great direction and good banter, the whole group on this shoot weekend worked really well together!

What was it like to work with Rouge?

Rouge is such a bably babe! she's the cutest. I was so at ease throughout, we connected really well and I definitely feel that comes across in these images. She's about a foot smaller than me though and I'm only 5'4 so she wore heels the entire time and I just went barefoot, teeny tiny lady! We'd been talking for a while about getting together and shooting as a redhead duo and I'm so glad we finally got to do it.

What was the funniest thing to happen at the shoot?

We covered my ass in glitter and Jasmine slapped it as hard as she could and we caught it all on a slow motion camera, it was GLORIOUS. I'm sure that'll make it on to patreon soon for all you that want to catch such a masterpiece.

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions?

I'm a hair stylist and colour expert and love my job, I'm known as the balayage queen.. Hit me up for beautiful locks ladies.



WHAT'S ROUGE'S BEST FEATURE? SHE HAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL EYES AND ALSO SHE'S MINIATURE, I LOVE IT.

WHAT'S YOUR BEST FEATURE? DAT BOOTAY, I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD BUTT.



So how can a guy impress you? Be confident and intelligent, smell good and make me feel like a princess and I'll be all yours.

Who has been your favourite model of 2017? Asami Suicide is what dreams are made of, literally. Damn.

What is the naughtiest thing you've done? I once found out my ex was cheating on me so instead of getting mad I got even and not only slept with the girl but made her my girlfriend for two years.. HA. I hope you're reading this dude.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? Neck kisses and inner thigh biting. mmm.

Beards - Yes or No? Entirely depends on the guy.

What's the worst idea you have ever had? Dying my hair black back in those scene days, it took me years and shaving my head to get back to my natural blonde. Never again.

Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite readers? Thank you for having me once again my Elite family, I hope you enjoy these images as much as I did getting all up close and personal with the one and only beautiful Rouge.

Photographer: Joseph O'Brien





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Valis Volkova

Photographer: Tripodski

Hey Valis! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself:

Hi guys, I'm Valis: a Eurasian model, actress and classical musician. I have a gypsy soul and a heart of gold. My spirit animal is a wolf (my surname means 'Daughter of Wolf' in Russian). My hobbies include travelling, reading, learning languages and collecting skills that I'll never use. I have a very dark, yet silly sense of humour and I'm a little socially awkward. You can usually find me in the corner of a bar, sipping red wine and meowing at strangers.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot?

I absolutely ADORE Tripodski! We have known each other for many years, so it was lovely catching up and socializing as well as the shoot itself. We always have amazing, fun shoots, but this one was my favourite so far!

What was your favourite part of the shoot?

Shooting in the bath with the Hex Bomb! I always joke about bathing in the blood of virgins when people ask me about my skincare routine, so I found it very amusing.

What's your favourite part of your body and why?

My boobs because if I get bored, I can play with them.





If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? Agent Provocateur because their lingerie is GORGEOUS and Ellen Von Unwerth who shoots for them is my favourite photographer in the whole world! Dream team!



On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? Oh wow, haha... ermmm... awkward question, Mutch?

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Normally Rum n Raisin, but I recently discovered Strawberry flavoured, coconut milk ice cream from Trader Joes (in LA). OMG, just NOM!

What's your favourite song currently? Skindred - Nobody

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Bloodstock, because VIKINGS and drinking from horns!

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? It'd have to be my Spotify playlist called "Good Shit". I'm too much of an eclectic maniac to stick to 1 album.

Describe your perfect photoshoot: Being paid to eat pizza. (Have already done this with the lovely Von Mohnfeld earlier this year in Germany).

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Xian in China! It's a beautiful place with a lovely energy and such interesting history! Xian is the home of the Terracotta Warriors. I went to see them whilst visiting the area and I was completely blown away!

What do you like most about Elite? The wide variety of MEGA BABES! Just WOW!







2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? My life has completely changed this year! After a shaky start to 2017, I unexpectedly moved house and started a new life in the south of England. This was really scary at the time, but it worked out for the best! I have met some of the most amazing people in the world this year, developed and strengthened friendships/relationships and I have had increased travel opportunities in USA, China & Europe. It has been a very emotional and yet wonderful journey so far!





WHAT'S A
GUARANTEED TURN ON
FOR YOU? A CHEEKY
SMILE AND A DARK
SENSE OF HUMOUR TO
MATCH MY OWN IS
ALWAYS A TURN ON!
ALSO I MELT FOR AN
IRISH ACCENT...

Photographer: Tripodski

FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS? FEEL FREE TO FIND ME ON INSTAGRAM (@VALISVOLKOVA) TO FOLLOW MY JOURNEY! I'M ALSO ON ONLYFANS, SO SUBSCRIBE TO MY PAGE FOR UNCENSORED PICS AND EXCLUSIVE CONTENT!







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**BORN
FOR HELL**

BETH KENDREW

Photographer: ATOM

Hey Beth! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself:

Hey! I'm Beth, I'm a cosmetic tattooer from the north with a serious love for dogs, memes, Attenborough, Theroux, Sabbath, 90's wrestling, 80's hardcore punk and all things fluffy.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? An absolute pleasure, ATOM is a complete pro and the loveliest guy going.

What was your favourite part of the shoot? I loved it all but the fact we listened to about 3 full Marilyn Manson albums while shooting was great <3 and of course raiding the Elite wardrobe for Killstar goods to try on.

What's your favourite part of your body and why? I'd say my lips are probably my favourite part of my body, and they're all real!

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? I think everyone should see themselves as a complete 10/10!









If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why?

I really love everything from @marywyattlondon so they would be a cool one, I also love brands run by strong women empowering other women. I'd also love to model for the natural history museum's merch in the hope that Sir David Attenborough may spot me and decide he could do with a young wife.

Photographer: ATOM

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far?

Honestly, 2017 has been a crazy year for me. My business is doing great, I'm single for the first time in years and I'm surrounded by the people I love. As difficult as it's been, I still feel lucky to be who I am and where I am right now.

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream?

Cinder toffee (from the ice cream parlour near me, you seriously need to come with and try it)

What's your favourite song currently? My favourite song will always be Black Sabbath - Electric Funeral

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Download, but in one of the VIP tents! Fuck that mud situation. Friendliest festival, best bands and you'd get to hang around with all my friends who are absolute 10/10 babes.

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? This is so difficult though! I'm going to have to say Fleetwood Mac- Rumours, because I was brought up listening to it and I'll always have a soft spot for it.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? If you have a Corgi, I'm yours.

Describe your perfect photoshoot: I'm so desperate for a holiday now so I'm going to say on some glorious beach in Fiji.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? Universal Studios in Orlando (specifically the Springfield part because The Simpsons is life). I also really love Amsterdam, I used to go about four times a year and I've got some great memories for life from there.

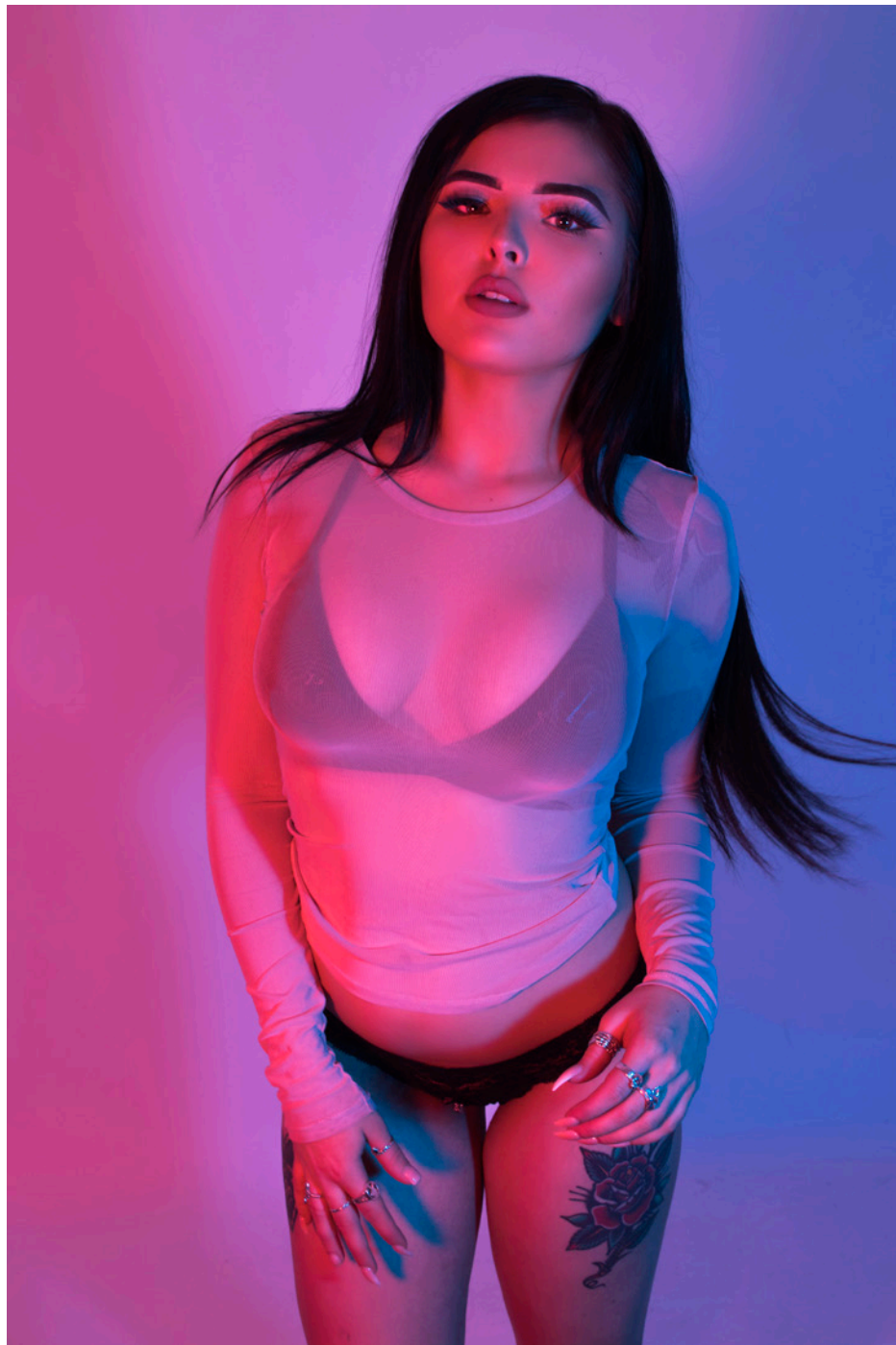






WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT ELITE? I LIKE HOW OPEN THEY ARE IN TERMS OF LETTING ME MODEL WHATEVER I FEEL LIKE MODELLING AT THE TIME, THEY ARE SO QUICK AT GETTING THE IMAGES EDITED AND BACK AND ALL THE GIRLS INVOLVED ARE COMPLETELY GORGEOUS AND SO SWEET TO EACH OTHER.





FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS? HOPE YOU ENJOY MY SET! CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR WHAT YOU ALL THINK. IN A WORLD OF TOM HARDY'S, BE A SETH ROGAN.





HELLO KITTY EBONY
BODYCON - £35.00

A woman with vibrant blue hair and extensive tattoos is shown from the waist up, holding a Hello Kitty catsuit. She is looking down at the garment. The catsuit is white with a repeating pattern of Hello Kitty's face and red bows. The background is plain white.

**HELLO KITTY
CATSUIT - £39.00**

PLANET VANDY

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DANI DIVINE

Welcome Dani, how are you? I'm very relaxed, currently sitting at home in PJ's and a cup of tea ready for my interview!

Seriously though, we're so thrilled to have you in Elite. Did you have fun shooting for us? It was wicked, we had so many outfits and looks, I was buzzing the entire time!

What is like to grace our cover again? You always have the most beautiful girls gracing your covers, I'm honoured! I'm so glad to be back, I love Elite.

What was it like to shoot with Elite? So much fun and ridiculousness, clothes everywhere, non-stop laughs, cups of tea, the lot. And to top it all off the shoot ended in a nice hot bath. ATOM is a top bloke whom I've known for many years now, and this was my first time working with him as a photographer. He absolutely nailed it and all the pictures were literally all incredible! Oh, and we listened to lots of Nickelback!

You always seem so effortless on camera, is it hard reinventing yourself for new features? I just go with the flow - without thinking about it too much! I always make sure to have loads of new outfits for shoots to keep me inspired, try something a little different with the hair and make up, and the location we had was perfect for this shoot.

So you seem to travel a lot... where has been your favourite place? I love travelling, but for me the people make the place! I have so many good friends and networks all over the world, so my favourite places to visit are probably Tel Aviv, LA, Amsterdam, and Berlin. Although they are all very different, I think I love these places for the same reasons!




What are your hobbies?

Making latex clothing is my new favourite hobby! I have picked up some skills over time, owed to the fact that the best latex designer in the world is my best friend (Iris from House of Harlot).



EVERY TIME OF THE YEAR SEEMS EXCITING FOR YOU. YOU'RE ALWAYS UP TO SOMETHING. WHEN IS YOUR CHILL TIME AND WHAT DO YOU GET UP TO? MY CHILL TIME CONSISTS OF VERY BRIEF MOMENTS OF CALM AMONGST THE CHAOS! I LIKE RELAXING WITH FOOD AND TV SERIES, GOING OUT WITH FRIENDS FOR DRINKS, BROWSING SHOPS, JUST NORMAL STUFF I WISH I HAD MORE TIME FOR.





You are without a doubt one of the most awesome people we have met! Have you always thought you wanted to model or did it just happen? It just sort of happened that way, it started off as a hobby but then it really started making sense. I enjoy modelling so much, all the travelling and wearing exciting outfits all the time. I hope it's something I will continue for many years to come!

Something you wear with aplomb is your sense of style. We bet you are starting to put quite a collection. What is your favourite piece? My absolute favourite outfit I've ever worn is my calendar outfit for 2018. It was designed by House of Harlot and I also had a hand in making it! Stay tuned for this latex beauty..

It was clear from your feature you have a great figure! Where does that come from? Do you have to work for it or is it just good jeans/genes? I tend to go through phases where I'm motivated, love hitting the gym and eating healthy.. but then months just go by where I'm way too busy to focus, plus travelling makes it that much harder. So I guess a bit of both! I'm naturally curvy and I absolutely love food, but I do live a very fast paced lifestyle which I think makes up for it a little!



You have one of the best bums going! What is your personal fave body part? I'm definitely a bum person! So let's go with that then.

With that in mind, which person do you think has the best bum at the moment? Iris, as a matter of fact!! Damn that ass girl.

Someone once asked me to describe "bad ass" in two words and I said Dani Divine. You're a definite icon of just general amazingness too. Do you see yourself as a bad ass? A lot of the time I do feel very bad ass, it's healthy for the self esteem to do the things in life which makes one feel like a bad ass. I highly recommend it to anyone!

INSPIRATION IS IMPORTANT TO YOU, BE IT MUSIC, FILM OR BOOKS. WHAT IS INSPIRING YOU AT THE MOMENT? RICK AND MORTY IS MY CURRENT INSPIRATION IN LIFE!





**ARE YOU A
HOMEBIRD OR
SOMEONE THAT
PREFERS A NIGHT
ON THE TOWN? I'M
BOTH AND I'M ON
THE EXTREME END
EITHER WAY!**

What's next for you? Now we've hit October, I've got loads of spooky shoots coming up as well as a new Corpse Bride themed show!

It's been a pleasure Dani. What are you up to after this interview is done? Gonna finish off a few emails and get into bed. Glamorous indeed.

Have you got a message for your masses of fans and our lovely Elite readers? I hope you enjoyed the read and of course the pics. Thanks guys!







Photographer: ATOM

**FINALLY, WILL YOU BE
COMING BACK TO US
SHORTLY AS WE CAN'T
GET ENOUGH OF YOU!
ALREADY PLANNING MY
NEXT TRIP BACK! LET'S
NOT LEAVE IT SO LONG
UNTIL NEXT TIME.**



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PHOTOGRAPHER: JACK RUSSELL @JACKRUSSELL_PHOTO
MODEL: ROUGE SUICIDE @SHOWMEYOURTITCH



Alexa Webb

Photographer: Mike White

Hey Alexa! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: I've just recently turned 21, I have 3 cats and 2 dogs, I love tattoos and piercings and I'm obsessed with drift cars!

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Mike was lovely to shoot with, as soon as he picked me up I felt at ease like I'd known him for years. It was really chilled out and fun!

What was your favourite part of the shoot? It's hard to pinpoint a certain part, all throughout the shoot we were laughing.

What's your favourite part of your body and why? I think my favourite part has to be my eyes, as sometimes they are bright blue and other times more grey.

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? I would love to model for Killstar or Belial clothing, both dark and edgy. If I could my wardrobe would be filled with their clothing.





ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN, HOW GOOD LOOKING ARE YOU? THAT'S TOUGH... I'D GIVE MYSELF A 7.5.

Photographer: Mike White





**WHAT'S A GUARANTEED
TURN ON FOR YOU?
I'M A SUCKER FOR
BEING CHOKED...**







WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE SONG CURRENTLY? TORN
BETWEEN BMTH - DEATHBEDS AND THE PRODIGY -
BREATHE. BOTH HAVE BEEN ON REPEAT RECENTLY.

Photographer: Mike White





**WHERE HAS BEEN YOUR
FAVOURITE PLACE TO
TRAVEL? MENORCA, EASILY
ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL.**



2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? Mine has had some drastic ups and downs, I had to take a step back and work on myself for a while. Things are on the up now and I'm excited to see what the rest of the year throws at me!

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Ben & Jerrys brownie... No brainer.

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? I haven't been to a festival yet myself, but if I could I would want to go to Tomorrowland, it just looks unforgettable.

If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? Probably Russ - There's really a wolf!

Describe your perfect photoshoot: Good music playing, fun outfits and chilled vibes.

What do you like most about Elite? How lovely and supportive Team Elite are!

Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite Readers? Thank you all for reading and if you would like to see more of me you can find me on Instagram and Snapchat: @alexa.webb

Photographer: Mike White







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Photographer: Laughing Orc

CHLOE MASON





Hey Chloe! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Hi everyone! Okay so I'll just hit you with the basics: I'm Clo, I'm 18 and I model full time. I'm a massive book lover, I have a thing for binge watching TV shows and I'm always up for an adventure!

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? I loved working with Laughing Orc, he's professional yet has a hint sense of humour. It was amazing to finally work with him! I look forward to working with him more!

What was your favourite part of the shoot? Getting to meet Laughing Orc was my favourite part, that and all the tea obviously!

What's your favourite part of your body and why? I'd say my favourite part of my body has to be my eyes. I feel like eyes are important to a person because they never lie. You can tell everything about a person by looking into their eyes.

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? Hmm, that's a hard one. On a good day I'd say maybe a 5.

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? I absolutely love The Killing Tree clothing because their designs are amazing, other than that I'd love to model for a lingerie company because I am IN LOVE with lingerie... a girl can never have too much lingerie, right?

Photographer: Laughing Orc



WHAT'S A
GUARANTEED
TURN ON FOR
YOU? DEFINITELY
PERSONALITY.







Photographer: Laughing Orc

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? 2017 has been a real eye opener for me, I've found my ground professionally, but I've also made some of the most amazing friends this year.

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? I'm probably going to be hated forever for this, but I cannot stand ice cream.

What's your favourite song currently? Oh dear me, what a question! I'd have to say that Daughters by John Mayer and Hospital for Souls by Bring Me The Horizon are both tied first place as my favourites. I relate to both of them in different ways, so they are both meaningful to me.

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? I have to say I'm the odd one out here because I know nothing about festivals! Call me boring, but I'd much rather sit at home with a cup of tea reading a book...

Describe your perfect photoshoot: Oh damn this really is a hard one! I think my perfect photoshoot would range from fashion and clothing brands straight down to some artistic nude, modelling with other models throughout the day in each style. Cups of tea provided, have a laugh and grab the money shots!


Where has been your favourite place to travel? There's a place in Edinburgh that has an astronomy auditory and you can see all the stars so clear and even look through a telescope at planets, it's so peaceful and beautiful. That's my favourite place and at any chance I get I'm definitely going to go again.

What do you like most about Elite? I like how Elite uses such a diverse range of models and includes a full questionnaire to get to know the models more. I think it's lovely.

IF YOU COULD LISTEN
TO ONE ALBUM FOR THE
REST OF YOUR LIFE,
WHAT WOULD IT BE?
SEMPITERNAL BY BRING
ME THE HORIZON





A person with long, light-colored hair is seen from the back, wearing a dark plaid shirt. They are looking towards a background of bright, out-of-focus light spots (bokeh) against a dark background, likely trees or foliage. The lighting is soft and natural, creating a serene atmosphere.

Photographer: Laughing Orc

FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS? I'D JUST LIKE TO SAY THANK YOU! IT'S BEEN AN HONOR TO SHARE PART OF MY LIFE WITH YOU AND IF YOU'D LIKE TO KEEP UPDATED YOU CAN CHECK OUT MY INSTAGRAM CLOMASONMODEL. I HOPE YOU HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY!



JESS &



Photographer: Tristan Manas

KELLY



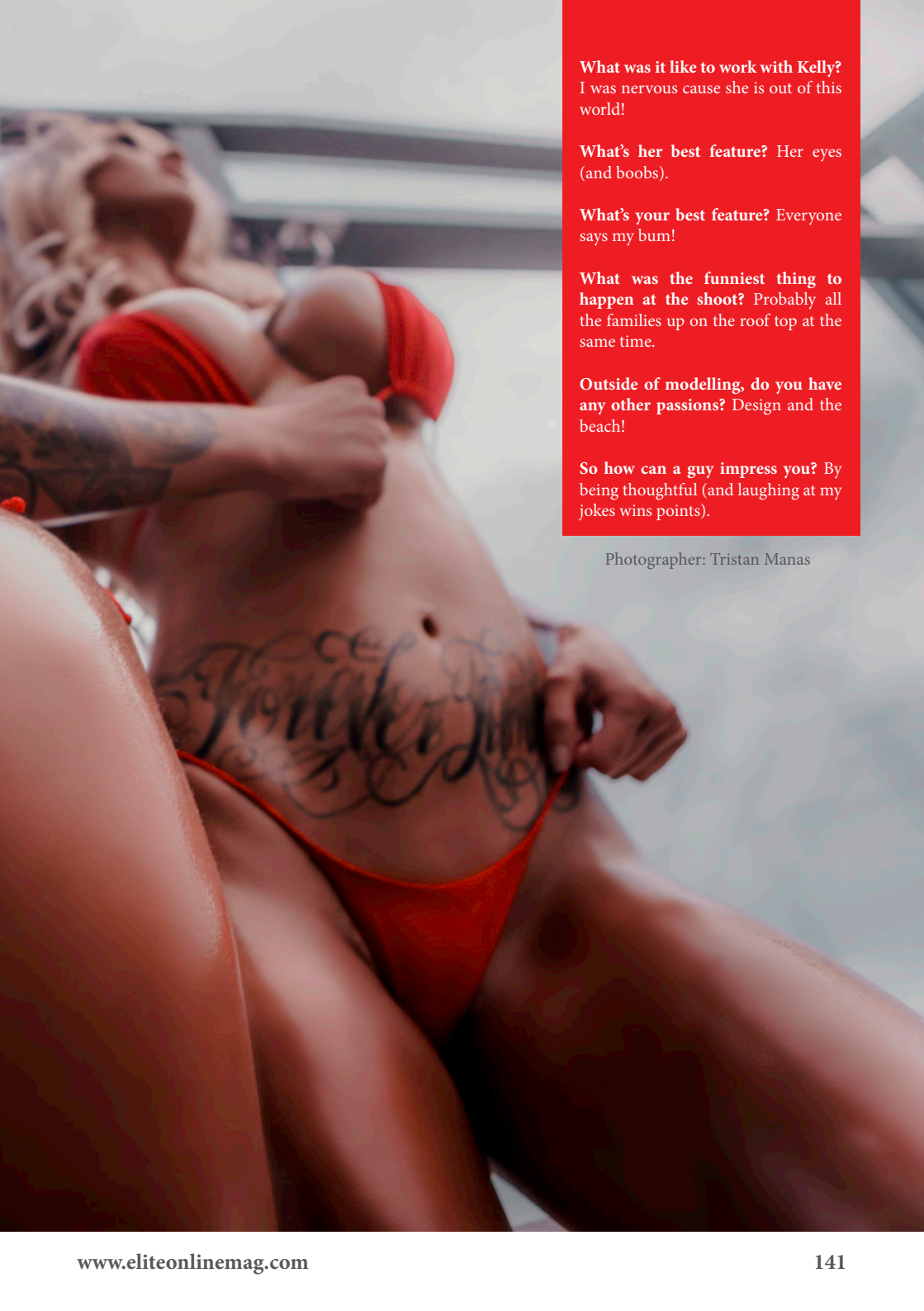


HI JESS, WELCOME TO ELITE! HOW DID YOU ENJOY THE SHOOT? HI, IT WAS SO FUN AND SO OILY!

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO WORK WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHER ON THIS SHOOT? FUN AF! TUNES, BEHIND THE SCENES SNAPPIES AND LAUGHS THE WHOLE TIME.

Photographer: Tristan Manas





What was it like to work with Kelly?
I was nervous cause she is out of this world!

What's her best feature? Her eyes (and boobs).

What's your best feature? Everyone says my bum!

What was the funniest thing to happen at the shoot? Probably all the families up on the roof top at the same time.

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions? Design and the beach!

So how can a guy impress you? By being thoughtful (and laughing at my jokes wins points).

Photographer: Tristan Manas





Who has been your favourite model of 2017? I'll forever have a crush on Aussie Ruby Rose.

What is the naughtiest thing you've done? Oh I couldn't answer that!

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? Dirty texts.

Beards - Yes or No? Depends on the face.

What's the worst idea you have ever had? Going out drinking and dancing in Miami till 3am thinking we would make our 6am flight haha.

FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS? HOW MUCH OF A BABE IS KELLY?! AM I RIGHT?!

Hi Kelly, welcome to Elite! How did you enjoy the shoot? Hey. It was really fun because it was the first time I have worked with another model :)

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? Tristan is always amazing, he is the easiest photographer to work with!

What was the funniest thing to happen at the shoot? I was actually one week post surgery at this shoot, so trying to look like I wasn't in agony was hard haha.

Outside of modelling, do you have any other passions? Animals and makeup!

So how can a guy impress you? By working hard and staying loyal!

Who has been your favourite model of 2017? Christy Mack will be my fave for life!

What is the naughtiest thing you've done? In the last week or....?

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? Burgers and a UFC Main Event.

Beards - Yes or No? Can I braid it?









**WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO WORK WITH
JESS? HMM HAVE YOU SEEN HER!? <3**

WHAT'S HER BEST FEATURE? DAT BOOTY!

**WHAT'S YOUR BEST FEATURE? I'D LIKE
TO SAY MY SENSE OF HUMOUR, BUT WE
ALL KNOW IT'S THE BOOBIES!**

Photographer: Tristan Manas

WHAT'S THE WORST IDEA YOU HAVE EVER HAD? FOSTERING 5 BORDER COLLIE PUPPIES IN A LITTLE TOWNHOUSE!

FINALLY, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE ELITE READERS? I HOPE YOU ENJOY :)

Photographer: Tristan Manas







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Photographer: James Beddoes

LISHA BLACKHURST

Q&a





Last band you saw live? [@geekbiker101011]

The last singer I saw live was Marina and the Diamonds and it was FULL of 13 year old girls haha! And before that Rammstein I believe, or perhaps Britney Spears. I like a good mix! And heading to see Gary Numan in October again, cannot wait, he's fantastic live!



Have you ever had a really disastrous date?
[@1stalien]

I was once on a date in a restaurant where the guy kept pushing and insisting that I order another drink, a starter, everything, because it was all going to be HIS treat, although I had previously said I was happy to go halves! He then sat on his phone the entire time, even when he was eating, and when the bill came and he realised the date was a disaster, he then asked me to pay half! I paid, got my friend to call me with an emergency, and got the hell out of there! Hahaha

What is the best was you deal with inappropriate and disrespectful questions or comments? [@j_kenny74]

Man, I love that block button. I block EVERYONE. It's not my style to deal with negativity; I block around 30 people a day, from "send nudes" to dick pics, to the even more bizarre! The internet is full of crazy people, it really isn't worth anyone's time to respond to most of them! Some I do like to call out and post to my fans too though, to serve as a warning! That's always hilarious! But honestly, you can't let that stuff get to you. It speaks volumes about the people who SEND those types of things, if someone wants to abuse a stranger on the internet, that's their issue, not yours!

What do you believe, from your own experience, may be one of the most important personal qualities any model should consider when deciding upon a career in the industry?
[@bradleyrusso]

You have to have a thick skin, and an open mind! Most of this stuff is truly empowering and positive though! But you have to know it will affect the rest of your life too. I've lost jobs and made a lot of enemies through doing this, not everyone understands this world, and you have to be prepared to stand up for yourself.

Photographer: James Beddoes





What's your favourite game of all time? [@kenito_thejetrodriguez_bachus]


This is such a tough one! I have a lot of games that literally made my childhood, and I couldn't choose between them. Spyro, Tekken, Resident Evil, Test Drive, Goldeneye, Extreme G! I still play them all!



PHOTOGRAPHER: JAMES BEDDOES







Since you have a horror blog, how would you rate the horror genre now against the classic Hollywood horror movies of the late 60s and 70s? [[@funko_fyed](#)]

The beauty of the horror genre is it fully interpretable, and can be adapted to reflect sociological fears. What terrified us in the 60s isn't necessarily what we would fear now! So horror needs to progress to reflect those deeper issues, and we need those classic movies like Dawn of the Dead and Godzilla to show us the history of our culture. The most interesting developments are seeing the use of a particular monster, such as the zombie, and how it is modified across the decades. That stuff really interests me!

What kind of music do you like? [[@matthewfurtado69](#)]

I listen to such a range of genres! Deep down, the stuff that reflects my music taste has to be Industrial Metal, things such as KMFDM, Static X, Rammstein, Celldweller and Zeromancer, but I do listen to a lot of Europop too, particularly Swedish and Russian pop! Medina, Serebro - if I have my music on shuffle it all gets a bit mad hahaha!

Photographer: James Beddoes







If you suddenly had \$100,000,000, what would be your first purchase? [[@patrickphart](#)]

I would probably up sticks and move somewhere new! I'm going to Switzerland tonight for a week, and I'd also love to visit Sweden, so perhaps I'd visit a few places and then settle outside of the UK somewhere!





Eliza Dawn

Hey Eliza! Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Hey Elite! Well overall I'm outgoing, bubbly and also quite mischievous, I find it very hard to take myself serious and never fail to see the funny side. I love being active and I am always super busy. When I eventually get some free time I like cooking, gaming, the gym and spending time with friends. I've always been a massive tomboy, when I'm not naked you'll usually see me in baggy band tees and ripped skinny jeans, asides from modelling I am working full time and finishing the last term of my degree.

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? As always Gemma is amazing, she's an incredible photographer and really nice to talk to. Afterwards you don't really feel like you've had a shoot just feels like you've had a nice catch up, highly recommend her to any model!

Photographer: Gemma Edwards





PHOTOGRAPHER: GEMMA EDWARDS

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE
PART OF THE SHOOT?**

WEIRDLY MY FAVOURITE
PART IS BEING NAKED, I
REALLY ENJOY HOW FREE IT
MAKES ME FEEL.







Photographer: Gemma Edwards

What's your favourite part of your body and why? Personally I like my tummy, It's always been nice and flat despite all the pizza I feed it.

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? I don't consider myself attractive and I certainly wouldn't put a number to it, I believe people's beauty shines through their personality, what they do, they're values and the decisions they make. Aesthetic beauty is overrated and shouldn't be relied on.

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? Oh tough question, there's loads of brands I'd be interested in modelling for. I am really loving Killstars Manson line, it's basically me and my partners wardrobe, so lets go with that.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? 2017 has been so good to me so far, I can't believe how lucky I have been, landed myself a good job and recently me and my boyfriend have moved into a really beautiful flat and everything just seems to be falling into place.

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Anything chocolate.

What's your favourite song currently? Killing loneliness - HIM.

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Warped tour! Everyone was so nice there, great music and nice weather, unlike British festivals.




PHOTOGRAPHER: GEMMA EDWARDS



If you could listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be? I'll have to go with Dark Side of the Moon. It's always something I can go back to.

What's a guaranteed turn on for you? I really like just being treated right, foot rubs, head strokes, and being told I'm his most favourite horse in the stable... er I mean, what?





Describe your perfect photoshoot: I really like the idea of shooting from home, walking around naked in your own place is different to being naked in a studio or a hotel. So my next set is going to be in my new place.

Where has been your favourite place to travel? I don't really have a favourite place per say, I just love the idea of discovering somewhere new with people I care about.

What do you like most about Elite? I just love how sexy and confident all the models you feature are. It gives me something to aspire to.

Photographer: Gemma Edwards





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PHOTOGRAPHER: JACK RUSSELL @JACKRUSSELL_PHOTO
MODEL: ROUGE SUICIDE @SHOWMEYOURTITCH

A black and white portrait of a woman with long dark hair, wearing heavy eye makeup and dark lipstick. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her right hand is raised to her forehead, and her left hand is resting on her chest. She has a tattoo on her left shoulder and is wearing a necklace. The background is dark and out of focus.

Photographer: ATOM

ANNIE JOSEPHINE

Welcome to Elite, for those who don't know you, tell us a bit about yourself: Hey! I'm 22, I LOVE animals, tattoos and music. I also love to party!

What was it like to work with the photographer on this shoot? I had the best time, I love working with you guys, I am always laughing.

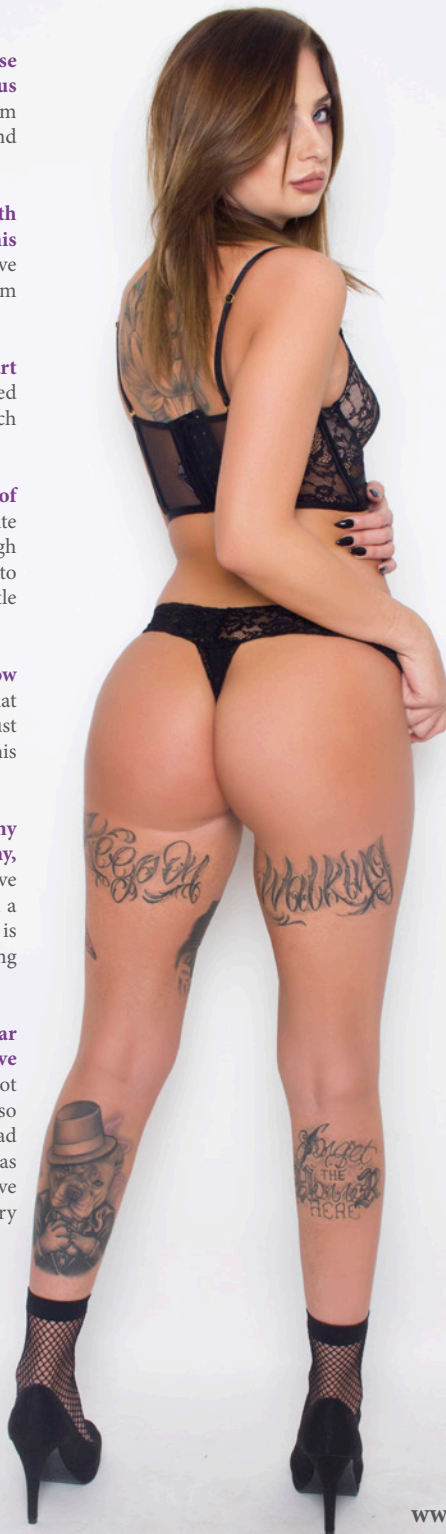
What was your favourite part of the shoot? All of it! I enjoyed every second, The team are such legends.

What's your favourite part of your body and why? I'm quite happy with my boobs, although they are small I'm blessed to have a perky pair with little nipples.

On a scale of one to ten, how good looking are you? That ones a matter of opinion, I must be doing alright to be in this amazing magazine though!

If you could model for any brand, product or company, which would it be and why? I've been quite lucky, I've reached a few of my goals. My next goal is SuicideGirls! I also love doing stuff for Malice.

2017 has been a pretty big year for many people. How have you found it so far? Well I got back into modelling this year so that's a massive bonus! I've had a few big changes in other areas of my life, all extremely positive so 2017 is definitely going very well for me.







**WHAT'S A GUARANTEED
TURN ON FOR YOU?**
**MUSCLY GUYS, WITH NO
BODY HAIR, PICKING ME
UP AND WRAPPING MY
LEGS AROUND THEM.**



WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT ELITE? THEY ARE LIKE ONE BIG FAMILY, SO WELCOMING, SO FUNNY, I HAVE THE BEST FUN SPENDING TIME WITH EVERYONE FROM ELITE, AND THE GIRLS ARE SEXY AS FUCK.



What is your favourite flavour of ice cream? Right now, can someone get me some raspberry ripple please?

What's your favourite song currently? Ok what a tricky one! I can never choose one album let alone a song. When I'm drunk though, my definite favourite is Lifestyle - Rich Gang.

If you could take us to any festival, which would it be and why? Reading had to be my favourite I have so many amazing memories from there and have been the most times.





Describe your perfect photoshoot: Oh I have so many dream shoots. In an ideal world I would love to shoot with tigers! However I think I should accept that's a lot to ask!

Where has been your favourite place to travel? LA, or St Lucia. I have been lucky enough to have travelled a lot. But I want to go back to LA, it is my favourite.

Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Elite Readers? I love you all so much, thank you for welcoming me back. I'm not going anywhere this time, I promise!





ARCTANG

17-19 AUG



EVENT

AUGUST 2017

Located in the South West of the UK is the popular ArcTanGent, a festival for everything alt rock, noise, math, hardcore and a little bit of everything else. We arrive early and set up in the sunshine and wander around the site waiting for 5000 people to come and join us.

Thursday afternoon kicks off with Waking Aida from Southampton. Not too dissimilar from Explosions In The Sky, one of the weekends headliners, they bring subtle tones and smooth grooves to Fernhill Farm and set us on our way with their brand of math rock.

Bearded Youth Quest are up next with smiles all round and lean more on the distorted and heavier side of the math rock scene with intricacy and intrigue being the main focal points. A slight wardrobe malfunction and we're back to it.

With people turning up by the bucket load now the PX3 stage, the smallest of the stages, is spilling outside of its structure as Fall of Messiah come on. There's ferocity in their playing with a furious punch that really accentuates the bands use of the classic quiet/loud dynamic. The songs move a lot faster and carry more interest than a lot of the other bands on the bill this weekend, not stopping to meander or lose their way at all.

Math rock favourites Totoro really spark the crowd into life as the rain begins to pour at ATG with chilled vibes and erratic bursts of energy. Frenetic drum patterns and emphatic builds make this one of the most interesting propositions of the day.

Now there's actually some singing and words! Amazing! Tall Ships are one of the more indie/alt rock aspects this weekend, they draw a sizeable crowd but are a lot less chin strokey than many of the bands on this bill but still manage to have expansive canvases to paint on.

For the final time, for now, is Heck. The band announcing literally a couple days beforehand that ATG would be their last show. And how did they go out? Just like you expect, in a blaze of chaotic brilliance. After walking hand in hand with each other the band do what they best which is turn up, plug in and leave nothing on stage. They were on inspired form, walking on the crowd, scaling the speakers, amps, barrier, absolutely anything they could. 'The Breakers', 'Mope' and 'Good As Dead' are all amped up to 11 as well as the crowd surfing, security giving up on catching those coming over but opting instead to push them back from where they came. They have no chance or idea what to do when Jonny and Matt decide to fuck the stage off and ride around the crowd like Aladdin on a carpet. You will be missed Heck.

Tonights headliners are Russian Circles who command the ATG crowd with heavy and articulate attacks bracketed with an ambient beauty that has seen them garner such love and praise over the years. Head bobbing rhythms and sky high soundscapes sound a little muddled over the PA tonight and an hour of this does become a little tedious as many call it an early night.



Day Two starts easy on the ears with beautifully crafted math rock courtesy of Gilmore Trail as we then make our way for the first time to the Bixler stage to catch itoldyouiwoulddeatyou. Emotive college rock similar to Modern Baseball or Sorority Noise. A call of “queers to the front” from on stage and their between song patter contains many references to the queer scene as well as the LGBT community. This definitely feels like a safe space for those who feel lost or like outcasts as the bands music soothes and is instantaneous. We went to watch this band because of a lot of online hype and we can firmly say they were definitely worth checking out with their brilliant songs and profound messages.

Our first taste of the main stage, the Arc stage, is to catch Alpha Male Tea Party who’s soundcheck is one of the funniest few minutes of the weekend, all three members being a nuisance for the sound man and keeping us entertained whilst they set up. Thick textured riffs and rumble create a sense of urgency in their playing with more interesting passages than a lot of their peers and air tracks off their new album ‘Health’.

Back to the Bixler for some doom stoner rock from OHHMS. They are incredibly loud with big slabs of guitar that pummel our ears with added weight and power, however some of these moments are soured by the vocals. Frontman Paul is clearly inspired by the likes of Ozzy Osbourne as he moves like him and even claps in between parts like the legendary showman. His vocals don’t always fit in tune with the music but that doesn’t stop their set from being fun with one member cracking open a beer over the drum cymbals and chugging mid way through a song.

Listener make their way onto the main stage and give us over 40 minutes of their version of US talk rock, not too far away from La Dispute or The Front Bottoms. It’s all about story telling and Dan Smith’s lyrical narratives keep us enthralled and in between songs his dry humour keeps thing light and upbeat despite the fact that the band were robbed at a show a few days before.

Scottish metallers Frontierer are a different kettle of fish as opposed to a lot of the bill



in a way with their sharp guitar attacks that yield an unrelenting and bludgeoning game plan. It's techy enough to appease the casual on looker and heavy and fast enough for the hardcore contingent to sink their teeth into. A barrage of strobe lighting creates an uneasy feeling that fits perfectly with their spazzy riffs.

Over to the Yohkai stage just in time to witness one of the best sets of the weekend. Having never seen Bossk before or even listened to them this reviewer got a heads up beforehand that the band were astounding at Bloodstock festival and their vocalists will leave the stage for extended periods of time as the band treat us to their ethereal blend of doom laden tracks. But when he does appear before us its phenomenal. The sheer power and tone of his voice just makes this puzzle complete, it is a set of breathtaking moment after moment that we never want to stop. Incredible.

The tent is so busy for Ho99o9 that we can't even get close as we make do with standing outside in the drizzling rain to see what all the fuss is about. Blending hip hop with hardcore and punk shouldn't work but duel frontmen TheOGM and Eaddy work tirelessly to get the crowd into a frenzy with beats and bass heavy songs that offer a little something different to the usual ATG line up. It seems that their recent support slot on the final The Dillinger Escape Plan UK tour has done them a world of good.

The final band of the day and our first main stage headliner, Converge, are met with anticipation and sideways rain. It doesn't dampen the mood at first as they open with 'Dark Horse', 'Aimless Arrow' and new single 'Under Duress' off of the bands new record The Dusk In Us, coming out November 3rd. It's just banger after banger as Kurt Ballou unleashes his lethal tone and genius playing upon those sticking it out despite the rain pounding away. "Worms Will Feed, Rats Will Feast" is exceptional as well as the epic 'All We Love We Leave Behind' and the recent 'I Can Tell You About Pain' is dripping in venom and heartache. Ending with the climactic and rare 'Jane Doe' is something else. An hour well spent showing every band how its done here at ATG, a truly legendary performance.



Now we're on to the last day and starting off our Saturday is Brighton based three piece Toska. We're treated to more of the same with intricate and ambient math rock that does become a bit tedious and dull after a short while. Things don't pick up either as we head over to see Future Horizons and the vocals unfortunately are nowhere near the lofty ambitions the band have set out in their music. However Lost In Kiev spark our attention and provide a brilliant set of progressive and expansive post rock with well orchestrated passages that don't overstay their welcome.

The Bixler tent is bursting with people waiting for Belgium band Brutus to come on and when they do they arrive to the types of cheers and adoration of long awaited heroes. They're simply fantastic from start to finish as they play the bulk of breakthrough album Burst with the likes of 'All Along' and 'Drive' being exceptional high points. Carrying on this positive energy is local melodic hardcore lads Landscapes. Several line up changes recently has slightly hindered the bands progress but having seen them on multiple occasions over the years we can definitely tell that the fire in their bellies is prominent on the PX3 stage. There's more energy, more passion and smiles aplenty and this is down to having an audience who cares and sings the words back to them here at ATG according to vocalist Shaun Milton whom we catch after their set briefly.

The hardcore doesn't stop there as US concept veterans Defeater put in one of their best performances on these shores in recent years. With their last album Abandoned receiving a muted response from fans they turn up with a point to prove as every member fires on all cylinders to get the wet and weary crowd whipped into a frenzy with mosh pits, deafening singing and even one guy being father of the year with his child aloft front and centre complete with ear defenders. A stellar set from a band who have much left to offer.





ARCTANGENT
17-19 AUGUST 2017

Onto a sad note this is bass player Jamie Venning's last show with Employed To Serve and everyone on stage and in this tent make it so that he gets the send off he deserves for his years of service, and if it wasn't for Converge last night this would take the top spot for set of the weekend. They are on crushingly outrageous form, tighter than ever before and deliver their set with frightening intensity. Brady from Conjurer takes over guitar duties at the tail end of 'Beg For Rain' so that Sammy Urwin can crowd surf around the ENTIRE tent whilst Black Peaks drummer Liam Kearley scales a support pole at the back covered in glitter and masked in sunglasses to throw the horns and his support for his friends and fellow UK band.

The crowd surfing continues somewhat surprisingly over on the Arc stage for Tesseract as they indulge us in clean, soaring melodies that cascade over the nuances and expert musicianship that the band are well known for. Couple that with golden hour and it all makes for a visually impressive performance. The sound gremlins return for Sikh's slot as Mikee Goodman's mic doesn't seem to want to play ball for the first 10/15 minutes or so which frustrates not only him but those witnessing in the Yohkai tent. Their music translates better live and becomes more bearable if you're like this reviewer and have struggled to get into the technicality and eccentric nature of the bands music over the years. Ending ArcTanGent back on the Arc is a UK exclusive show from Explosions In The Sky. The light show is simple yet stunning and really enhances the senses when mixed with the beautiful and all powerful dynamic that the band dole out over and over again to spectacular effect.

An incredible end to a varied and wonderful festival that even though features many different genres and sub genres has a real community feel to it and brings together those of all ages to enjoy it as one. Whether you're young and with your friends or a family person exploiting this experience and scene to your children, it really is for everyone.

Words by Joshua Clarke
Photos by Robert Tilbury



ARCTANGENT

17-19 AUGUST 2017





INTERVIEW WITH COMEBACK KID

AVI DHILLON PHOTOGRAPHY

YOUR NEW RECORD 'OUTSIDER' SEES A LOT MORE OF YOUR PUNK INFLUENCES CREEPING INTO THE MUSIC, WAS THAT A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO ALLOW YOUR PUNK FLAG TO FLY OR DID IT COME NATURALLY?

I think that punk influence has always been there from day one but always shows it's face in a different kind of a way on each record, for some reason I can't explain. And yes, I would have to say it comes naturally. On this record we certainly did not set out to try and have more of a 'punk' tone but rather it just came through in some of the songs that way. It's always kind of interesting to see the evolution of a song. Many times the initial idea for the song is this simple straight ahead idea that can meander into a completely different realm than originally intended. I'll give you an example. With 'Hell of a Scene', my idea initially was to keep it really straightforward in kind of a crusty way but with middle of the song turn a bit of a twist when I started sneaking some melody in there. Of course as I went down that rabbit hole it ended up kind of sounding like a mix of that 90's alternative sound we grew up with that punk attitude.

THE GUEST SPOTS ALSO STEER CLEAR OF TRADITIONAL HARDCORE WITH CHRIS

CRESSWELL FROM THE FLATLINERS AND NORTHCOTE, DID YOU FEEL THEY WOULD FIT THE RECORD BETTER THAN SOME OF YOUR HARDCORE PEERS?

Usually the ideas for who to ask for guest spots come late in the recording process when the vocals are being tracked and we can hear what we are looking for a little better there. Though that discussion can also start earlier and as again, the song meanders through different sounds it can change. So yes, the overall idea is always to find a vocalist who suits the part regardless of whether they fit that hardcore thing or not.

POSSIBLY THE BIGGEST SURPRISE WITH 'OUTSIDER' WAS THE APPEARANCE OF DEVIN TOWNSEND ON FIRST SINGLE 'ABSOLUTE'. HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT AND WHY WAS HE CHOSEN FOR THAT SONG?

This is a good example of what I was referring to in the previous question. As Andrew was layering his vocals in the latter part of the song, he was really getting into that Devin style to build it the way we wanted it to sound. It became clear that Devin would be an obvious fit for that part of the song. It was now

more a matter of whether or not he had the time or interest to do it and lucky for us he was down for it after he heard the song!

YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN A BAND SINCE THE YEAR 2000 WITH ANDREW AND JEREMY BEING FOUNDING MEMBERS, A LOT OF HARDCORE BANDS NOTORIOUSLY ONLY LAST A FEW YEARS SO WHAT DRIVES YOU TO KEEP COMEBACK KID ALIVE?

I can only speak for myself but heavy or hard music is just a part of me full stop. Even if this band ended tomorrow, I think I'd still have to put together a band or project just to get that out and appease that part of me. We are fortunate that we are still able to tour and make music and obviously having that amazing fan base is what makes it all come together at the end of the day. If the fans didn't believe in us, there would be no shows, no interested labels, and no money to keep going back to the studio to make new music.

YOU HIT EUROPE AND THE UK THIS WINTER WITH HIGHER POWER, KNOCKED LOOSE AND EVERY TIME I DIE, AN UNBELIEVABLE LINE UP, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO COPE/UPSTAGE THE OTHER BANDS ON THE BILL FROM NIGHT TO NIGHT?

Our plan is never to upstage but just always to put our best foot forward. They will definitely be tough acts to follow but we have done these tours a million times feeling a little overwhelmed at who we have to play with/after, but at the end of the day, we have to be focused on what we do and give our fans the show

they came to see as well as try and win over some new fans. Very excited about that tour as we have not toured with ETID since 2003.

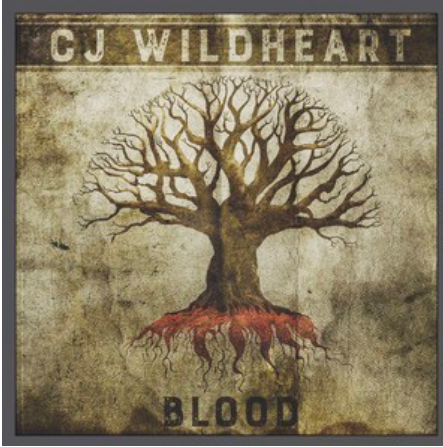
ARE THERE ANY BANDS THAT FANS OF HARDCORE AND PUNK SHOULD BE AWARE OF RIGHT NOW?

Being a little older I find it harder and harder to stay on top of what is new and cool but two bands that I'd like to draw some attention to are; Get The Shot and Jesus Piece. Get the Shot is a band that I wasn't too familiar with until we toured with them earlier this year. They just put out a new record so I'd encourage people to check it out. And Jesus Piece is one of those bands that I think can and have already turned some heads. I haven't seen them yet but we are doing US dates with them in October, so I'm stoked to see them as well as the reactions they get.

FINALLY IN 2017, WHO NEEDS COMEBACK KID MORE, YOU OR THE FANS?

I think it depends who you talk to but from my stand point, as I alluded to earlier, no fans = no Comeback Kid. We are 100% reliant on their support to keep doing what we do. I know there are also fans out there that rely heavily on music to get them through hard times and struggles that life sends their way so I also know, as I was one of those kids, that music can be there for you when it seems no one else is and can at least provide some reprieve from the daily grind or lows that people experience. We need each other is what I am really trying to say.





CJ Wildheart - Blood
Devispit Records | Release Date: 20th October 2017

Blood is the third solo album from CJ Wildheart, formerly of legendary Brit-rockers The Wildhearts and Honeycrack. In a similar vein to his previous solo albums, Blood harks back to the edgier and more hectic side of The Wildhearts, with fast stomping drums and distorted vocals. Songs like Lazybones and Itch even delve into “Industrial” territory a la Ministry and Mad Capsule Markets.

Despite the music’s aggressive nature on the whole, there is still a hint of Wildhearts cheekiness and humour, both musically and lyrically. There’s even a South Park quote used throughout the majority of Kiss It.

50 Percent Indian is the closest musically to a pure Wildhearts classic. It also stands out as the most personal, with CJ describing the kind of prejudice he has come across due to his colour and how he’s proud to be who he is. Although every track on here has a crowd-pleasing quality to it due to the energy and instrumentation, this has the most potential of becoming an anthem and not just to the minorities. Besides the cover of Weezer’s Tired Of Sex which doesn’t really do anything special to the original nor add much to the record as a whole, Blood is a surprisingly exciting, electrifying and heavy album for a veteran who most would expect to have slowed down. Hopefully this record will pull him up from under the radar and gain him the respect and notoriety he deserves.

Words by **Jonathan Miller**



Comeback Kid - Outsider
Nuclear Blast | Release Date: 8th September 2017

Comeback Kid have spent years as one of the top bands in the hardcore scene with their incendiary live shows and consistently brilliant records. Can they keep this long standing record going on new album Outsider?

The title track opens up the record and see’s no real swerve or immediate direction change as they tackle the track at a steady pace and lashes of melody. Second song ‘Surrender Control’ brings back the groove and gang vocals that they have done so well throughout their career. The inclusion of Devin Townsend on first single ‘Absolute’ was a move no one was expecting but his screeching and at times guttural vocals bring a new flavour, a darker edge to Comeback Kid’s music. There’s punk in abundance and it isn’t more evident than on ‘Hell of a Scene’ with a frantic opening that flows effortlessly into sunny Californian pop punk terrain.

The guest spots continue with The Flatliners frontman Chris Cresswell making an appearance as well as Canadian singer/songwriter Northcote lending his vocals to the album’s moody closer ‘Moment In Time’. The band have stated that they chose the guest spots to serve the songs, as they always have and not just go with the tradition of having their hardcore peers. The ragers are still here in full effect with ‘Outrage (Fresh Face, Stale Cause)’ and ‘Livid, I’m Prime’ taking up that mantel and running with it. A more expansive effort this time around without losing any of the fire that has kept the band going and relevant since the year 2000.

Words by **Joshua Clarke**





Counterparts - You're Not You Anymore

Pure Noise Records | Release Date: 22nd September 2017

Steadily rising the ranks with their blend of ferocity and beauty in their brand of melodic hardcore is Counterparts, a band who relentlessly tour and have gone through more line up changes than a premier league team playing a non league outfit in the FA Cup. However the revolving door of changes hasn't hurt or strayed too far away from what makes Counterparts unique. The album awakens with a short and sweet instrumental that is the calm before the storm of 'Bouquet' that explodes from every angle to become an instant classic among fans and bring together everything the band do so well and then some with work clearly having been done on Brendan Murphy's clean vocals. More melody and power have strengthened his voice and the options the band have to build around. 'Haunt Me' hints back to the days of 'The Difference Between Hell & Home' with a more layered outlook and melody being front and centre instead of the angular brutality that see's 'Thieves' over and done with in 76 seconds.

The record itself is a tighter, more compact piece of work that compromises all the tricks Counterparts have picked up from their friends and peers over the years of intensity and heartbreak. However it isn't immediately noticeable or effective, a couple listens are definitely needed to really get inside YNYA and all its intricacies. The lyrical themes remain the same speaking of self-worth, mental health and the different forms of relationships. Since fans resonate so deeply with Murphy's lyrics the band strived to make their music easier to sing a long to live, something they've definitely nailed here with hooks and catchier refrains all over this record.

Words by Joshua Clarke



Four Year Strong

Some of You Will Like This//Some of You Won't

Pure Noise Records | Release Date: 8th September 2017

When it comes to pop-punk with metal riffs, Four Year Strong are up there as one of the bands who do it best. Their new record of rare tracks and (mostly) acoustic reimaginings is aptly titled. Fans of their shredding, jagged rhythms, double kick breakdowns and general fun vibes might not be on board with the mellow versions of favourites like It Must Really Suck To Be Four Year Strong Right Now and Abandon Ship or Abandon All Hope. However, others who love their meaningful lyrics and experimental musicianship can appreciate those more clearly with the songs stripped to their bare essentials.

Who Cares? is one of the few on here that remain closest to its original. The slower pace and lighter tone of the acoustic guitar magically turn it into a Weezer-esque summer jam. We All Float Down Here also lacks the edginess of the original but makes for a surprisingly enjoyable Country number.

As well as the remakes, there's untouched rarities including the catchy drum machine ladden Your Ego's Writing Checks Your Body Can't Cash (an early demo track) and the sweet For Our Fathers, previously only available as webcam footage on Youtube, which makes for a poignant closer.

Some of You Will Like This//Some of You Won't is certainly an experiment that has borne some elegant fruit; whether it's an essential purchase for anyone besides die-hard fans is questionable.

Words by Jonathan Miller





Implore - Subjugate

Century Media Records | Release Date: 22nd September 2017

Implore return in brutal form with the mighty Subjugate, their latest album and first for new label Century Media. The bands brand of blackened death metal has not been dulled over the years and in fact, comes back nastier and heavier on this first album for their new label.

Subjugate is a mammoth offering that is relentless in its bleakness and is fourteen tracks of blackened nihilistic heaviness and while the band have demonstrated their knack for this heaviness before, they definitely take things up to another level on this album.

Tracks like the blistering Loathe, the berserk Totalitarian and the bruising Untouchable Pyramid show a band with a renewed outlook and execution for their music, one that is even more unhinged and focussed in its heaviness than before.

Implore have made an album here that revels in its hatred towards anything that steps in its path and sounds all the better for it and any fan of metal, whether it be death, black or grind will find a lot of things to love on this album.

Words by **Gavin Brown**



Seaway - Vacation

Pure Noise Records | Release Date: 15th September 2017

Two years since their last album, Seaway is back! With this being the band's third album, Retro tinged release Vacation sees the Canadian pop punks put a spin on their usual sound with a dose of something new and tracks influenced by artists past and present.

Lula On The Beach cites the influence of Weezer and Fountains Of Wayne with its fuzzy instrumentation and its catchy backing vocals whereas tracks such as Day Player cite similarities to other current bands on the scene such as Neck Deep's newer material with a very melodic and upbeat feel. Though, don't be fooled, this doesn't devalue their ability to write incredible songs and a huge chorus as this album is full of them! The chorus of track Neurotic ("Wake me up when I'm famous") is a perfect example of this ability and is just one of the many lines that are bound to be stuck in everybody's heads. A couple of tracks fall onto the verge of not sounding too dissimilar from each other with use of similar lead guitar parts but doesn't change the fact that this is a fantastic album!

Bound to be on repeat for months on end, Vacation is an album packed full of amazing anthems perfect for closing out the summer and an exceptional addition to the bands discography!

Words by **James D Maxim**





The Black Dahlia Murder - Nightbringers

Metal Blade Records | Release Date: 6th October 2017

It is a testament to TBDM that 16 years since their initial inception they still exhibit the energy and aggression required for Death Metal.

Even the atmospheric sections ooze aggression, as evidenced by the stabs on opener Widowmaker, unnerving the listener before the band has played a note.

Once they do strike though, they strike hard. Vocalist Trevor Strnad showcases his dynamic vocal range that as always, will have you questioning how such a range of sounds can come out of one person. New lead guitarist Brandon Ellis also acquits himself nicely, showcasing some dazzling lead breaks throughout Nightbringers' 33 minute running length.

Although they don't deviate too far from established tropes, there are a couple of curveballs buried under the blast beats; Matriarch's verse riff and its stomping feel, being one example. Or its Metallica-esque bridge (albeit with a much better drummer involved).

Elsewhere the title track has a much slower, groove oriented feel exploring more mid-tempo fare, and is a definite highpoint of what is a consistently excellent album.

Ultimately Nightbringers delivers everything a fan of the band could want from a Black Dahlia release, whilst delivering just enough curveballs to keep things interesting throughout.

Words by **Robert Burns**



The Bronx - V

Cooking Vinyl/ATO Records

Release Date: 22nd September 2017

LA quintet The Bronx are quite the enigma. Not only are they (probably) the only band with a Mariachi side project but their music has always cleverly blurred the line of aggressive hardcore punk and classic rock. With every record, the rock side inches its way further to the foreground, leading to memorable songs your mum could hum along to.

Although the psychedelic artwork suggests that V (aka BRVNX) might transport you to the middle of a desert with nothing but a bag of shrooms, there's less stoner vibes than one would expect. Two Birds and its Rival Sons style riff comes close but a majority of V, including Stranger Danger and Channel Islands, are more reminiscent of the punk rock 'n' roll of The Hellcopters matched with the sleazy hard rock of Buckcherry. Closing track, Kingsize, is a surprise Foo Fighters-esque anthem which makes for a refreshing addition.

Although there's still a few examples of the band's now iconic shout-filled punk sound (for those who don't like change), it's their adventures into other realms using that same energy and intensity which earns V most of its merit.

Words by **Jonathan Miller**



GAMING: SEPTEMBER ROUNDUP

Welcome to the gaming section! We have our usual spread of the latest reviews and previews, and our top 10 this month highlights the best Dynasty Warriors-style games. Don't forget to check out our Gamer Girl this month - the awesome Saliss!

UPDATED MY JOURNAL EDITORIALS FROM THE STAFF

JAMES HALL GAMING EDITOR

Ready for silly season? We're heading into the winter months of massive release territory, and given 2017 has been a year full of huge games, that's saying something. We have the yearly Call of Duty, Need for Speed and Forza games on the way, and Nintendo really wants to round off October with Mario Odyssey. Then there's Wolfenstein II, Star Wars Battlefront 2, and so much more.

This month my gaming has mostly been split between Mario & Rabbids Kingdom Battle on the Switch, and X-Com 2 on PC, so it's something of a turn-based strategy month apparently. I've mixed it up with some classic Sega platforming though - blasting through Sonic Mania in an attempt to get all the Chaos Emeralds and finally trying out the gorgeous remaster of Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap.

We rounded the month off with a trip to EGX, where we got to play a bunch of games coming out over the next few months - look out for our hands-on previews with those over the next couple of issues!

OUT THIS MONTH

THE BIGGEST RELEASES COMING OUT THIS MONTH

DESTINY 2 (PC, PS4, Xbox One. out 5 September)



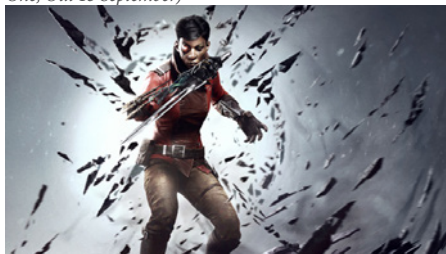
Turns out we did want a new Destiny after all, and Bungie seems to have delivered the goods here - improvements across the board to storytelling and exploration, but the same excellent combat the series is known for.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM INFINITE (PC, PS4 out 15 September)



Fighting games are definitely back in vogue, and Capcom is seeking to capitalise on the Superhero movie mania with the latest Marvel vs Capcom title, which ditches the X-Men cast in favour of a bunch of big screen Marvel stars.

DISHONORED: DEATH OF THE OUTSIDER (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Out 15 September)



Dishonored 2 was something of a masterpiece, and we're pretty excited for this standalone expansion. The first Dishonored's DLC was some of its best content, and there's every chance Death of the Outsider will follow the trend.

GAMING GADGET

XBOX ONE X



£450 gets you the most powerful console ever made, but it is worth it? It's a tentative 'yes' - the Xbox One X is a sounder proposition than the PS4 Pro, as it's actually capable of delivering modern games at 4k. But aside from Forza 7 there aren't any heavy hitting game releases to go alongside it, and Microsoft needs to make a better case for its existence than it has so far. Still, if you want a console that will go toe-to-toe with a gaming PC, you can't get better. At the minute.

ON THE HORIZON GAMES WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO

RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

(PC, PS4, Xbox One, Spring 2018)



Take that 'Spring' release date with a pinch of salt, but RedDeadRedemption2 is shaping up to be a spectacular sequel to one of Rockstar's best loved adventures.

DOOM

(Switch, Winter 2017)



It might seem strange to be getting excited about a game that came out last year, but id Software's exceptional Doom reboot is coming to Nintendo Switch, and there's something wonderfully weird about that fact.

LEFT ALIVE

(PS4, PC, 2018)



Details are thin on the ground on Left Alive, other than it's a survival shooter set in the Front Mission universe, and that it features designs from Metal Gear artist Yoji Shinkawa.





SONIC FORCES

(PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch, out 7 November)

Sonic Forces has a bit of a problem on its hands: it's fanfare has been usurped by SEGA's remarkably good retro Sonic title, *Sonic Mania*, a game effectively made by fans under license from Sonic Team. It delivered everything long-term Sonic fans were looking for, which leaves *Forces* in an unenviable position: how do you deliver something that's already been delivered? Sonic Team's answer is to offer a very different take on the Sonic experience, one that draws from across the blue hedgehog's tumultuous history. The results, so far, seem mixed.



Four distinct game modes were on offer with the build we played at EGX, and each has a very different feel, so we'll handle them individually.

What's true of all of them is that *Forces* is a great looking game, full of vibrant colours and stylish animation flourishes, and it certainly paints a heroic view of our anthropomorphic allies as they battle hordes of Eggman's robotik minions. It also, mercifully, does away with the terrible *Sonic Boom* redesigns. And it packs a fantastic soundtrack. So we're off to a good start, at least.

The first section on offer is a 'Modern Sonic' level. A mostly into-the-screen action platformer in the *Sonic Adventure 2* vein.. for better and worse. All the 3D Sonic hallmarks are here; homing attacks, incredible speed, showpiece vistas... along with iffy controls, sudden pitfalls, and boring enemy design. The into-the-screen boss battle is a set-piece highlight, but it feels kind of janky in its execution.

The second demo level is a 'Classic Sonic' section, which plays out in 2D with 3D visuals. The classic Sonic controls are there, and this section feels almost as tight as *Sonic Mania* thanks to sharp jumping controls and recognisable running physics. It's a re-imagining of the Green Hill Zone boss battle from *Sonic 1*, with Eggman now transitioning through a couple of different forms, but it plays like a dream.

The Avatar demo is less successful. This is Sonic Forces' bold claim; you can create your own Sonic character and play as them, arming them with weapons and defeating Eggman's minions. In practice, doing so is a bit sluggish, with stiff animations and weapons that feel both too slow and too finicky to use, though it is a fun, different experience. The most offensive sections of the demo are a masterclass of bad level design - one 2.5D section requires you to jump across a series of narrow platforms, each occupied by an instant death crusher that will kill you if you time your jump wrong, and the whole thing is suspended over an instant death abyss. Navigating this section is an exercise in frustration at best.



The final game mode is Tag Team, which pairs your avatar character with Sonic in an into-the-screen mode. This is more fun, as you can use both character's abilities on the fly, mixing Sonic homing attacks and spins with your avatar's weapon abilities, which can result in some pretty stylish looking sequences. But the level design and camera once

again conspire against you, putting you up against a load of circular platforms and narrow walkways, resulting in your death should you fall off, or jump off, or get knocked off, or fly off when the game switches homing attack target the instant you press the button and hurtles you into the abyss. when the last section of the game bugged out on me after I fell through a solid metal platform that led to the next part of the stage, resulting in me falling endlessly through the world, I took it as a sign to leave the game alone.



There are moments when Sonic Forces is reminiscent of the best moments of Sonic Adventure 2 - and for all its faults, that game did have some high points - but it's also reminiscent of the worst moments as well. Sonic Mania was a reminder of why the 2D Sonic games have lasted appeal - and Sonic Forces really needed to make a solid case for why 3D Sonic games should continue to exist. The Jury is out, but so far it still has a bit of work to do.





DISSIDIA FINAL FANTASY NT

(PS4, Early 2018)

For those who don't remember, Dissidia Final Fantasy, and its sequel, Dissidia 012 Duodecim, were PSP fighting game spinoffs from the Final Fantasy series, notable for pulling heroes from different FF titles together into a one-on-one fighting game with RPG elements, and for having incredibly cumbersome names. Ten years after the first game in the series, Square Enix is back to have another crack at turning the RPG franchise into a fighting game, with the equally clumsily named Dissidia Final Fantasy NT. Well, at least some things haven't changed.



In fact, NT is a port of a 2015 arcade game developed by Team Ninja, though the PS4 version is much expanded, with more characters and a story mode.

We got to test out the new version's multiplayer mode at EGX 2017, along with some of the new characters and mechanics.



The most immediate change is the switch from one-on-one combat to a new three-on-three system. Characters are now divided roughly into four classes, with different ability loadouts - these were preset in the version we played, but should be customisable in the full game. As a baseline, all characters have two types of attacks - Bravery and HP. Characters have to build up their Bravery level with the former, though being hit by opponents will reduce your own Bravery. Opponents can only be damaged by HP attacks which, if landed, inflict damage equal to your current

Bravery score and reduce it to zero. There's a fun risk / reward mechanic that comes from trying to improve your own Bravery and accrue enough to take down your opponent, whilst at the same time trying to protect your score and make sure you're not left vulnerable. With three opponents instead of one, this is especially true, and it makes for some interesting tactical choices.



That's especially true when working as a team in multiplayer, where communication is vital. Shortcuts are mapped to the D-pad and face buttons so you can quickly fire off messages to your teammates, calling out targets or requesting assistance. Your character's special abilities often boost your teammates as well, healing wounds and restoring Bravery, so supporting your allies is equally important. There's further variety added through the summon system, which lets your team call on the support of seminal Final Fantasy entities like Bahamut and Shiva for huge boosts, though summoning them requires all three players in a team to work together by holding the touchpad until the summon bar fills. Effective coordination is integral to success, and it's not hard to see how an esports scene could spring up around the game despite its complex mechanics.



There are definitely areas where the game could use some improvement, however. The arenas we got to try in the demo were fairly dull, mostly simple bowl shapes with little scenery besides a few ledges here

and there; hopefully the full game will include some more intricate maps to battle over. A more immediate problem is the busy interface, which is cluttered with bars, gauges and numbers arranged in a not immediately clear format. It won't be a problem for Dissidia veterans, but it does make the game difficult to approach as a newcomer, as does the somewhat clumsy control system, which maps key abilities to buttonpress combinations and doubles up targeting and dodging controls on a single shoulder button whilst committing the entire Dpad to communication. We're hopeful these can be customised in the full game, but it does serve to highlight how important communication is within multiplayer matches of Dissidia NT if core gameplay functions have to be relegated to button combos.



We didn't get to see any of the game's single player or story modes, and only a handful of the characters were available - returning favourites like Cecil and Cloud were present, along with newcomers like Y'Sholta (from Final Fantasy XIV). What we did see certainly looked the part - the character models are well detailed and it's great to see classic characters brought to life with near-CG quality, though the stages were rather uninspired in comparison. Crucially, the game ran flawlessly, and felt responsive and tight to play.

There are definitely a few kinks left to be worked out, but there's time yet before the game launches on January 30th for Square Enix to fix these. What's here already is solid and deceptively deep, offering fast and fluid gameplay whilst also delivering a tactically challenging fighter / RPG hybrid. It's shaping up to be a great revival of the Dissidia series, and with it's new home on PS4 it should be in the right place to command the audience it deserves.

TOP 10: MUSUO GAMES

Okay, we admit it. We're big fans of Omega Force's Warriors series, which turned 20 years old in February. Whilst to an outsider the formula for the series may not appear to have changed greatly in that time (except for the first title, which was a one-on-one beat-em-up) in actual fact there is a lot of nuance in the way the individual titles play. The core concept remains the same - one hero versus thousands - and the games have delivered this signature heroic-feeling gameplay in spades in over thirty titles. The relatively simplistic hack-and-slash combat is complemented by tactical and RPG elements, which come together to form an engaging core loop of action, character development, and strategy.

So for this month's Top 10, we thought we'd present our favourite Musuo-like titles - including Omega Force's Warriors series, but also throwing the efforts of some other developers into the mix.



10. ONE PIECE: PIRATE WARRIORS 3

PS3 / PS4 / PS Vita / PC



It's probably the zaniest of all the Warriors games - and that's saying something - but when you pair an over-the-top action / strategy game with an over-the-top anime these things are bound to happen. It's packed full of content and fun tie-ins with the series, even those who aren't familiar with the anime will enjoy the craziness.

9. NINETY-NINE NIGHTS

Xbox 360



Not to be confused with it's vastly inferior sequel, *Ninety-Nine Nights* (or N3 as it's more easily known) was an early example showing off what the Xbox 360 could do. A spiritual successor of sorts to the *Kingdom Under Fire* games, it had a very distinctive feel and some really diverse heroes with unpronounceable names, like Dwingvatt and Vigk-Vagk.

8. BERSERK AND THE BAND OF THE HAWK

PC / PS4 / PS Vita



The Berserk series is a perfect fit for the Musou genre, and this game proves it. The strict adherence to the Golden Age anime can make it a bit impenetrable for newcomers, but the gritty feel and buckets of gore give this Warriors game a very distinct flavour.

6. WARRIORS OROCHI 3

PS3 / Xbox 360 / PSP / Wii U / PS4 / Xbox One



Still the best of the crossover games, Warriors Orochi 3 has a gigantic cast of characters and almost groans under the amount of content on offer. A sprawling story mode full of alternate timelines and branching paths is just the tip of the iceberg here.

7. WARRIORS ALL-STARS

PC / PS4



A cheery, colourful celebration of the Warriors games, All-Stars might have a somewhat questionable cast of characters from a range of relatively obscure games, but it delivers solid Warriors gameplay with a good deal of charm. Especially notably for the inclusion of Cat-Daimyo, Nobunyaga Oda.

5. SAMURAI WARRIORS: SPIRIT OF SANADA

PC / PS4



A much more focused, story driven version of the Samurai Warriors series, Spirit of Sanada succeeds in its attempts to offer a much more personal version of the grand battles the genre is known for. Strong personalities and a fascinating encyclopedia of historical information make this a strangely educational experience.

TOP 10: MUSUO GAMES

4. KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: HEROES

Original Xbox



Although its the oldest title in this list, released back in 2005 for the original Xbox, KUF:H is still one of the finest examples of its kind. Gigantic battles force you to think strategically, ordering your forces around the battlefield as well as leaping into combat yourself. A sequel has been in development since 2008 and has finally gone in to open beta in Taiwan in July 2017.

3. DRAGON QUEST HEROES 2

PC / PS4



A bit of a departure for Omega Force, Dragon Quest Heroes takes the large battles and responsive combat and wraps them up in the charming world of Square Enix's JRPG series. It has a different feel than most Warriors style games, but it's all the better for it.

2. HYRULE WARRIORS

Wii U / 3DS



This is a game that really shouldn't work on paper, but Omega Force managed to combat large scale Warriors gameplay with classic Zelda trappings to produce a wonderfully charming take on the franchise. The story mode is great, but it's the Challenge maps that really stand out with their varying objectives and retro aesthetics.

1. DYNASTY WARRIORS 8 XTREME LEGENDS

PC / PS4



It's the granddaddy of them all, but for good reason: Dynasty Warriors 8: Xtreme Legends is the most feature and content-rich title you could ask for, packed full of characters, weapon types, game modes and maps. Its accessible but deep take on Three Kingdoms era China proves an alluring draw that offers many hours of entertainment. them on how to disarm it. If that sounds like a recipe for disaster, well, it normally is, but it's a hell of a lot of fun.



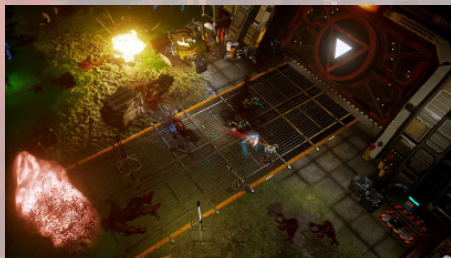
Review by Callum Walker

SOLSTICE CHRONICLES: MIA

(PC, PS4, Xbox One)

Solstice Chronicles MIA is a top down alien horde survival wave kill spree game. Yes, I just made that new genre definition up.

It comes from Developers Ironward who previously successfully kickstarted The Red Solstice, to which Solstice Chronicles is apparently a sequel. Although you would never figure this out while playing as the story in Solstice Chronicles is mundane to say the very least. Essentially something has gone truly wrong and you must shoot your way through a variety of levels in which you never really do much other than... shoot your way through a variety of levels.



The controls a bit clunky at times but you learn to adapt, and truth be told the hordes of different alien types are a lot of fun to shoot seven shades out of, due in part to the impressive visual look of the game. Graphically it looks right, the lighting is spot on and running it at 60+ fps is a doddle.

The guns are a bit samey, with not much variation, until you find the heavy weapons which are just ridiculously fun to walk around using.

The game does suffer from replayability issues, the levels are the definition of linear and with it just being you vs a horde, and once you've done it once there is no desire to do it again. Further the progression in game in terms of levelling up etc is very convoluted with it being suddenly thrust on you without warning or explanation, and to be honest even with spending points on skill that sounded useful i never noticed much of a difference.

Overall Solstice Chronicles isn't breaking any boundaries and plays it safe, but for mindless fun it has its moments.



6/10



Review by James Hall

STARCRRAFT REMASTERED

(PC)

Whilst my early RTS days were greatly influenced by Dune 2 and Command & Conquer, it was Blizzard's forays into the genre that sank their teeth into me. Warcraft II was my go-to strategy game of choice (which, embarrassingly, I played on the PSX as I didn't own a PC at the time). But Starcraft was the game changer for me. I lost countless nights playing against my mates over system linked PCs, got suckered in by the surprisingly good story, and loved nothing more than levelling an entire enemy base with a battalion of Siege tanks. And now Blizzard has remastered it.



And what does this new version offer? The clue is in the title. This is Starcraft Remastered, not Starcraft remake. If you go into this expecting a brand new, modernised version of Blizzard's RTS classic, you're in for disappointment. This is Starcraft as it always was, but with re-rendered artwork for modern, high

resolution displays. There are no interface tweaks, no quality of life improvements, no streamlining of existing systems: it's Starcraft, exactly as it was 19 years ago. But prettier.

"THE GAME HAS BEEN ENTIRELY REBUILT ON THE SURFACE, BUT THE UNDERLYING ENGINE IS THE SAME OLD STARCRRAFT."

The result proves to be a bit of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, this is Starcraft the way you remember it. The remastered visuals (which can be returned to the original graphics with a quick button press) are crisp and slick; details which could never be made out in the original game are now easily identifiable, and the game supports up to 4k resolution to really make those details pop. There's a real-time lighting option which adds a pleasing, but not too distracting effect, and the menu screens, unit portraits, game interface and video cutscenes now have widescreen support. The music and sound effects have been subtly reworked to provide a bit more punch, and... that's about it. The game has been entirely rebuilt on the surface, but the underlying engine is the same old Starcraft.



That means you can still only create groups of 12 units - fine for 1998, but this feels pretty antiquated by today's standards. Skirmish games still have to be selected from a cumbersome list. Units get stuck on pathfinding through even basic terrain. Unit commands can't be queued up. Mission objectives are hidden in a subscreen of the pause menu. These are all niggles the original game had, and whilst Blizzard has left them intact in order to preserve the appeal of the game for the esports crowd who have adapted to and mastered its foibles, it's a shame that such relatively simple fixes haven't been implemented, on the plus side, it means that the Remastered version of the game is cross-compatible with the original version of the game, but does seem like a bit of a missed opportunity.



That's pretty much the only way that Starcraft Remastered gives away its age, though. In practical terms, Starcraft feels as accessible and nuanced as it always has, with each of its three races packed with character and diverse units. There are few, if any, direct unit-to-unit analogues between the factions, ensuring that each has a very different feeling play style. Starcraft is a game that was renowned for its finely balanced design - one of the main reasons it's remained so popular in the eSports scene - and this balance is still in place, allowing for all manner of different, totally viable strategies in skirmishes and multiplayer games - yes, even Zerg rushes.



It's the campaign that impresses the most though, as almost two decades later it's still a highlight of the genre. Not for the way it's told, necessarily - animated portraits regale you with information prior to each mission, and there are some fairly basic cutscenes presented both in-game and between missions, but the delivery is mostly static. What makes it are the strong characters and excellent storyline that flows throughout; Starcraft is a saga of galactic domination and political intrigue, told from a ground level that makes the events feel very real, even when you're in command of the hive minded Zerg or the haughty, ancient Protoss. In pure gameplay terms, the missions are varied and interesting, and none of the three campaigns (one for each race) outstays their welcome. You also get the Brood War campaign, which, ramps up the challenge considerably.



Starcraft Remastered is very much what it says on the box. It's exactly the same game, with higher resolution visuals and improved sound. If you've never played the original, this is clearly the best way to experience it, but don't expect any of the modern conveniences you'd find in a more recent RTS. Even without them, though, Starcraft remains a landmark title, as relevant today as it has ever been, and Blizzard's carefully pitched remaster is pixel-perfect.

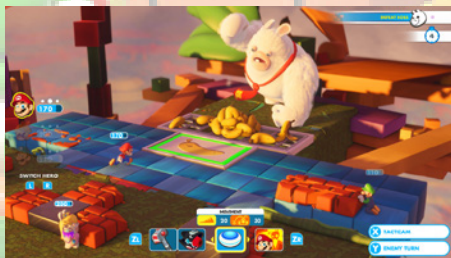


Review by James Hall

MARIO ± RABBIDS: KINGDOM BATTLE

(Switch)

By rights we shouldn't even be here. Very little about Ubisoft and Nintendo's crossover title makes any sense. Why would Mario, savior of the Mushroom Kingdom, and wacky Rayman critters the Raving Rabbids ever exist in the same universe? If you were going to pair Mario with a Ubisoft character, surely Rayman himself would have been a more logical choice. Why would you then hand over development duties of Nintendo's most cherished mascot to the French developer? Why would the resulting crossover game be a turn-based shooter, and not take the form of a platformer or party game? And why, oh why, would the game actually turn out to be... whisper it... really good?



But here we are, with a game that has clearly been a labour of love for its developers. The whole aesthetic from the minute the game opens is beautiful;

vibrant colours and softly rendered environments and characters boast a Pixar-like quality, with a tilt-shift depth of field and subtle animation touches lending Mario + Rabbids a style all of its own. Grant Kirkhope's delightful soundtrack is the perfect accompaniment to the surprisingly easy alliance of Nintendo charm and Rabbid wackiness.

"THE WHOLE AESTHETIC FROM THE MINUTE THE GAME OPENS IS BEAUTIFUL"

The first few battles really serve as an extended introduction to Kingdom Battle's take on XCOM inspired turn-based strategy. You'll take your team of three into combat, and during each turn your characters can move, attack, and use a special ability, in any order. It starts out simple enough, and the game employs a very basic cover system that makes planning your attacks initially straightforward - you have a 100% chance to hit an enemy in the open, a 50% chance to hit an enemy in half cover, and a 0% chance to hit an enemy in full cover. Of course, the reverse is true for your opponents as well. This might seem off-putting to strategy veterans (I came from playing XCOM 2: War of the Chosen to this, so the transition was a little jarring) but the inclusion of destructible cover, random critical effects from weapons (like Honey, which renders a target unable

to move, or Push, which catapults them backwards) help spice things up, and do weapons like bombs and remote mines which can target enemies behind cover. Some special abilities will force enemies away (or closer to you), and the huge range of moment options that open up as the game progresses make fights more about how to use your skills and positioning to



circumvent well-concealed enemies. Each character has their own specialities and traits; Mario can perform powerful jump attacks, Luigi snipes enemies from afar, whilst Rabbid Peach can heal her allies. The movement options are especially satisfying, and make Kingdom Battle a very agile game, so even though you'll only control 3 heroes you never lack for traversal options. Characters can slide-tackle enemies as a free part of their movement, use pipes to quickly hop around the battlefield, and springboard off allies (and enemies) to perform hero jumps. As some of the mission objectives require you to reach a target area on the map, mastering these options can make a huge difference to your progress.

Once the game is done with showing you the ropes, the difficulty does ramp up, especially by the third of its four worlds. Simply completing a level is rarely too challenging, but if you want to achieve a 'perfect' rating - and thereby earn more gold and skill points to spend on weapons and power ups - you'll need to complete the map with all three team members alive and under a certain turn limit. Doing so can be pretty tough - most stages consist of a couple of battles with limited ways to heal between them, and your enemies are pretty punishing, but it's the slightly finicky control scheme that will be your undoing more than anything else, as there's no confirm option for movement and no way to 'undo' a move. It's not uncommon to just miss the square you wanted your character to move to thanks to a slight wiggle of the analog stick, leaving Rabbid Luigi stuck in the middle of nowhere and giving every enemy a free shot at him. There's no mid-battle saving, so when this happens you're pretty much forced to start the fight over if you want that perfect score. Thankfully, you

can opt to replay missions once you've completed the chapter, so you can always go back and re-do any maps you didn't do too well on first time around.

When you're not battling Rabbids, you'll be exploring the regions of the mushroom kingdom. It's a pretty light and mostly linear path through the handsome environments, with a bit of light puzzle solving thrown in. There's a faint Zelda-like quality in that some areas can't be accessed until you've acquired new skills further into your adventure, which coupled with the inclusion of new challenge missions on existing maps gives you a reason to revisit older places, but for the most part the exploration is pretty straightforward. It does offer a welcome break from a constant string of battles, though, and the surprising inclusion of a co-op mode makes for a similarly fun diversion.

The zany Rabbid humour doesn't always mesh well with the Mario sensibilities - it's weird to have roomba-alike character Beep-O talking about Hell and seeing things like a Bullet Bill stuck in a pair of underpants, and the less said about the rabbid perched on a rubber duck, in a giant toilet, wearing a bondage collar the better. By the same token, it never quite feels right to have Mario shooting things with a facsimile of Mega Man's blaster, or Peach gunning enemies down with a shotgun (though parents can take some solace in the fact that our heroes aren't killing the enemies - they're actually just freeing them from the strange melding of the Mario and Rabbid worlds). And yet - amazingly - it works.

Once you do manage to get over the strange fact



that this hybrid creature even exists, it proves easy to love. It's friendly, approachable, and whilst it has its quirks, they don't detract from its sheer charm. It's a perfect fit for the Switch, even if the Mario and Rabbids franchises don't initially seem like a perfect fit for one another.



Review by James Hall

MEGA MAN LEGACY COLLECTION 2

(PC, PS4, Xbox One)

I came late to the MegaMan series. Very late, in fact; I somehow missed Capcom's quirky blue bomber during my adolescence and only found an appreciation for the games in recent years, partly spurred on by the first Mega Man Legacy Collection. So here we are with the second Legacy Collection, the second set of numbered mainline Mega Man games, this time titles 7, 8, 9 and 10.



These titles highlight an interesting evolution - and devolution - in the Megaman series. 7 was the first (and only) title to see the light of day on the SNES, 8 was a PS One title complete with dodgy FMV, whilst 9 and 10 deliberately return to the NES aesthetic of the original games despite launching on Xbox 360 and PS3. You can play any of the games in any order you like, with progress being saved if you back out of one game and switch to another. There's a few different sprite scaling and screen modes to soften the impact

of the pixel graphics, but I'd strongly advise not using the 'scaled' setting if you're playing on a widescreen TV, unless you like your sprites short, stretched, and misshapen.

If you've never played a Mega Man, well, you probably should be looking at the first Collection, but since you're here anyway lets run through the basics. The Mega Man series are side-scrolling platformers, in which plucky hero Mega Man must face the evil Dr. Wily and his henchmen. What makes the series so unique is that you can tackle the 8 stages in any order, and defeating a boss unlocks a new ability to use. There's a good deal of strategy to deciding which order to proceed through the game, and learning which abilities are most effective against which enemies. Oh, the games are also famous for being really, really tough, and the four games included in this Collection are no exception.



Mega Man 7 is easily the weakest title on offer, so its good (ish?) that the Collection gets it over with first. Whilst the SNES game does mix things by adding a preliminary intro level and some handsome full colour sprites, it's painfully clunky to play and the platforming and traversal feels sluggish. It does at least look good, with the large sprites packing loads of character into their 16-bit style, though Mega Man's running animation is hilariously bad.

Mega Man 8 might actually be my favourite. Whilst not the 'best' game here, its sprite-based PSX look, silky smooth animations and fluid controls make 8 a game that looks like a game from 1996, but it plays as well as the earlier games in the series. Its particularly notable for the hilariously bad anime cutscenes and hopelessly miscast English voice acting.



Mega Man 9 is hard. Put that in context of the rest of the Mega Man games, which often require a Dark Souls level of perfection, and you begin to grasp what I mean here. Mega man 9 is HARD. Insta-kills, pitfalls, and complex stages that often require pixel-perfect platforming. That said, the way the game handles is sublime, the level design is superb, and the NES-styled retro look adds a lot to the charm.

Mega Man 10 is like Mega Man 9, only nowhere near as tough. That's partly thanks to the inclusion of an 'Easy mode' which helps you learn the levels, but don't be fooled into thinking that Mega Man 10 is actually easy. It shares the NES aesthetic with its predecessor, and the same sharp platforming mechanics.



Of the bunch, 9 and 10 are the generally accepted favourites, though 8 (and, to a lesser extent, 7) are not without their charms.

“FOR THOSE LOOKING TO EXPERIENCE WHAT THE MEGA MAN GAMES ARE ABOUT, THIS LEGACY COLLECTION ISN'T THE MOST FORGIVING WAY TO DO IT.”

As for the collection itself, Capcom has done a solid, if not spectacular, job of curating the games and their associated image galleries. There aren't too many frivolous extras; just a boss rush mode and a few remixed levels. Frustratingly, it doesn't include the 'save anywhere' functionality of the first Legacy Collection, nor does it include a rewind function like the Disney Afternoon Collection. There are a few checkpoint saves at preset spots in each game, but these are a poor substitute, and render some of the most challenging games ever made as inaccessible as they ever have been, with the exception of a throwaway 'Legacy Mode' difficulty setting that gives the blue bomber a bit more life. That's a good thing for some people, but for those looking to experience what the Mega Man games are about, this Legacy Collection isn't the most forgiving way to do it. It's also strange that this second collection features less games than the first, and has less in the way of options and additional content.



On the whole, Mega Man Legacy Collection 2 is a pretty solid offering. It might not be the best the Mega Man series has to offer, but Capcom already covered that in the first Collection. The 'best of the rest', then, but that's not to say that there aren't some great games in here that are worthy of your time. It's just a shame that, compared to the original Legacy Collection, the relative lack of content and functionality here feels like a bit of disappointment.

7/10



Review by James Hall

SONIC MANIA

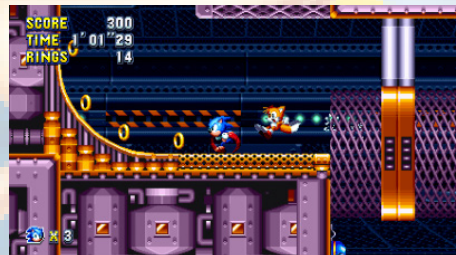
(PC, PS4, Xbox One)

23 years. That's how long it's been since the last truly good Sonic the Hedgehog video game. There's been plenty of Sonic games in that time, of course, but few of them could be considered anything even approaching 'good.' Sonic became the epitome of a washed-up videogame icon; his relevancy dulled by developers not knowing how to make the transition from fast-paced 2D platforming to the 3D world. Even more retro 2D efforts felt off, with Sonic Advance and Sonic 4 not recapturing the feel of the older games. It was starting to feel like SEGA really didn't know what to do with their beloved franchise, especially after the failure of re-imaginings like Sonic Unleashed and Sonic Boom.

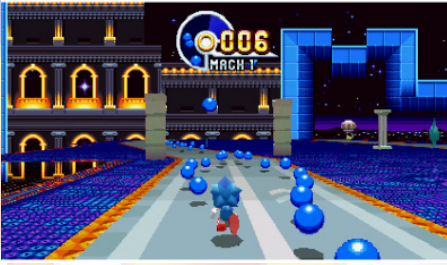


And in a move that other developers could stand to learn a lot from, SEGA turned to the fan community. In particular, to Christian Whitehead, whose

work on fan games landed him the job of adapting classic Sonic titles to newer platforms, as well as Headcannon and PagodaWest games, also known for Sonic fangames. And would you believe it, they've turned out the most authentic, most enjoyable Sonic game since Sonic & Knuckles.



The game takes place following the events of Sonic 3 & Knuckles, with Robotnik - sorry, Eggman - stealing a Ruby gemstone from Angel Island. This Ruby grants his robotic henchmen, the Hard-Boiled Heavies, strange new powers, and sends Sonic, Tails, and Knuckles back in time. The setup is a smart mcguffin that allows Whitehead and his team to revisit previous Sonic locations, as well as adding new twists to the classic formula, effectively remixing classic levels to introduce new gameplay mechanics and take advantage of capabilities of the Retro Engine that powers the game.



Twelve zones feature, eight of which are returning Zones from Sonic, Sonic 2, Sonic 3 & Knuckles and Sonic CD, and each split into two acts. With the classic Zones, the first act is a mostly faithful recreation of the original level, though extended and with additional course options. The second act introduces new elements; in Chemical Plant Zone, for example, you're able to mix chemicals with the purple water to turn it into a bouncy surface, whilst Oil Ocean act 2 adds a gradual buildup of smog which has to be cleared before it fogs your vision completely. The new elements never feel out-of-place, and the remixed layouts are designed to evoke a sense of familiarity whilst introducing enough new elements to encourage exploration. The new Zones are a perfect fit both thematically and visually, and fit in snugly alongside the classic levels.



The level design is pretty special, striking a delicate balance between allowing for high-speed runs whilst at the same time rewarding the more curiously minded. The game is mercifully light on high-speed traps - a trick Sonic Advance employed much too often, sending Sonic hurtling into spikes faster than the player can react and forcing memorisation of the levels - and the new mechanics and boss fights that are introduced make for some great, entertaining gameplay with few of the annoyances that plagued earlier games. Remixing the levels has allowed Whitehead and his team to pick and choose the most enjoyable elements of the games and sidestep the more frustrating mechanics -

though that's not to say you won't sometimes be faced with drowning in underwater sections or crushed between moving platforms, or that the game doesn't offer up a reasonable challenge.

Sonic Mania certainly looks and sounds great - the pixel aesthetic of the Mega Drive games is retained, though benefits from widescreen support and the careful removal of some constraints - sprites boast more detail, colour, and animation frames than their original versions, and the level art has been similarly tweaked. The soundtrack, which consists of remastered and remixed tunes alongside some new additions, comes from famed Sonic remixer Tee Lopes, and again fits Sonic mania perfectly. The result is a game that looks and sounds the way you remember Sonic looked, though viewed side-by-side there are clear differences. Likewise, the Bonus and Special Stages - lifted from Sonic & Knuckles and Sonic CD respectively - benefit from super-smooth framerates and a cleaned up appearance. The bonus stages also score you medals on completion, which unlock additional in-game items and game modes.



Most crucial of all, though, Sonic Mania feels like a classic Sonic game. The movement and jumping controls are tight and responsive, the physics and inertia feel natural, and the levels are designed to complement them perfectly. That'd wouldn't be such a big thing were it not for the fact that Sega has tried and failed to recapture these elements for two decades, but Sonic Mania finally manages it.

The kicker, and what really sets it apart, is simple: Sonic Mania is not just a great Sonic game. It's a great game by any standards, and maybe - just maybe - it's the shot in the arm Sega's mascot was so desperately in need of. Fans have been clamouring for this title for years, and now it's here, it doesn't disappoint.

10/10

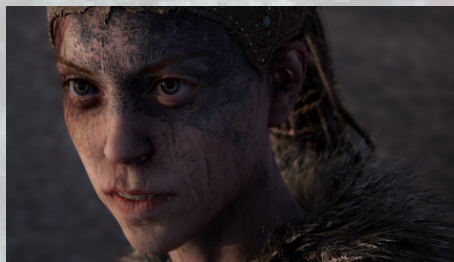


Review by James Hall

HELLBLADE: SENUA'S SACRIFICE

(PC, PS4, Xbox One)

Video games are not, as a rule, known for their subtlety in dealing with complex subject matters. There are exceptions, of course, but when you start introducing concepts that don't naturally fit with gaming as a medium it's easy for things to feel forced at best. For every Spec Ops: The Line, there's a Call of Duty. Games that explore their chosen subject matters with restraint and respectfulness are notable for their rarity.



Hellblade is not necessarily the most subtle in the way it deals with the complex issue of mental health that is central to its storyline, but it's certainly respectful. Ninja Theory - best known for their character action games Heavenly Sword, Enslaved and DmC - has crafted a fascinating deep-dive into the sanity of its latest heroine, Senua.

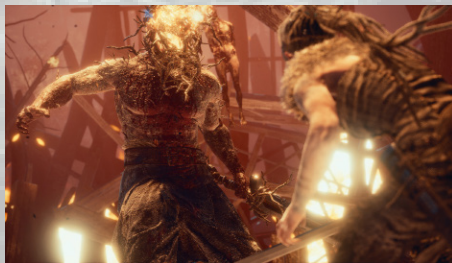
A troubled girl from the isles of Orkney, Senua sets out on a journey into Hell after her lover, Dillion, is killed by Northmen from across the sea (read: vikings) to reclaim his soul. During her journey, she confronts the demons of hell, but moreso has to confront her own demons. I won't spoil anything of the story here, as it's definitely something you need to experience as you play the game. But suffice it to say Senua has not had an easy life, and has lived with her Darkness - a crude, if effective, allegory for her depression - since her childhood.

"THE DEPICTIONS OF SENUA'S MENTAL HEALTH BLEED INTO THE GAME DESIGN."

What makes Hellblade's efforts so notable is the way that the depictions of Senua's mental health bleed into the game design. Most notable are the Furies; disembodied voices that accompany her on her journey, questioning her actions and her abilities. When you're looking for the next clue to proceed, they'll whisper insistently. "She doesn't see it! She's lost. She'll never find Dillion." When fighting an enemy, they'll taunt her, calling out her injuries or strong opponents. But it's not all doom and gloom from them; sometimes they'll call out gentle encouragement; even helpful advice on how to proceed on occasion. Their presence is a constant

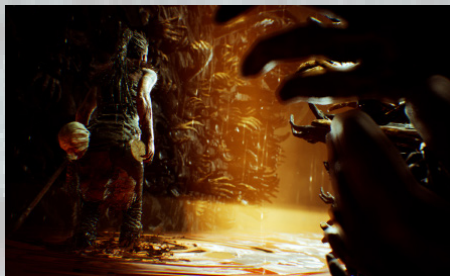
reminder of Senua's anxiety, and instills a sense of anxiety in the player, too, as they question your competence along with hers.

Other depictions are more subtle, and are tied into the nature of the gameplay and world design. Most of the puzzles - such as they are - rely on environmental perception, tasking Senua with looking for runes in her surroundings, which might be a shadow cast on the ground or ornamentation when viewed from the right angle. These lend a feeling of Senua trying to make sense of her surroundings and exert a bit of control over her situation, and the game often plays with these ideas further, with alternate pathways and illusions a staple of its environmental puzzling. Sadly, these puzzles don't really change much throughout the course of the game and are rarely difficult; the handful of other challenges on offer are far more interesting (a near-blind trek through a house and forest, haunted by terrifying creatures, is a clear highlight), though they never outstay their welcome.



When you're not scouring the environments for runes, you'll likely be fighting. Don't mistake Hellblade for an action game though - the combat is deliberately paced, and Senua is limited to light and heavy attacks, a melee kick, dodging, and a simple parry. You can combine attacks and dodges into makeshift combos, and combat is relatively satisfying, but there are only a handful of different enemy types in the game, all of whom can take a fair amount of punishment- though the game does at least give Senua plenty of chances to recover from her own injuries. That's just as well given the game's controversial save deletion mechanic, where the game threatens to delete your save if you fail too many times, though there are conflicting reports over whether this does in fact happen. Hellblade does, however, fall back on its combat a little too often, and with many fights involving multiple opponents over multiple waves it can get rather tedious. The trio of boss encounters are slightly more interesting, if similarly overlong.

Whilst neither the combat nor the puzzle solving are exemplary, Hellblade remains a competent adventure that really shines because of the strength of its storytelling and presentation. The visuals are breathtaking - particularly the performance capture on Senua, which really drives home the depths of her character and her emotions, though the environments are just as detailed and evocative. Some of the later sections of the game are beautifully grotesque, and the monsters that inhabit both the world and Senua's mind are nightmarish apparitions that almost tip the game into true horror at times. The voice acting and soundtrack are equally impressive, but it's the way everything comes together that elevates Hellblade to something beyond the sum of its parts.



Taken purely as a game, Hellblade isn't all that appealing. It can be tedious to play, has a few niggling bugs (like the fact that the dialogue subtitles don't always match the spoken lines) and the heavy subject matter makes it bleak and far from an easy ride. Part of me even wonders whether the game would have been better framed as a walking simulator, but without the risk of failure the presence of the furies would be far less effective.

But if you're going into Hellblade just for the gameplay, you're in the wrong place. This is a fascinating, in-depth exploration of mental health in a video game, and it feels as authentic and powerful as you could hope for. Over the course of its 6 or so hours you'll be dragged through hell along with Senua, but if even a fraction of what she goes through resonates with you, you'll come out the other side all the stronger. Hellblade might not be a masterpiece of game design, but it's a real achievement in interactive storytelling, and is a game everyone should play through at least once.



Review by James Hall

WARRIORS ALL-STARS

(PC, PS4)

Hey look! It's another Warriors game from Tecmo Koei - no, don't give me that look. It might be easy to frown on Omega Force's work as they churn out a seemingly endless stream of their signature Musou titles, but it really is doing their efforts a bit of a disservice. And as this latest crossover proves, Omega Force certainly aren't afraid to mix up the formula, whilst at the same time keeping the core gameplay the genre is known for intact.



Warriors All-Stars, then, is a sort-of successor to the Warriors Orochi series, but with a wider-ranging cast to draw from. Whilst Orochi primarily featured characters from the Dynasty and Samurai Warriors series, All-Stars plucks it's heroes from other titles in the Tecmo Koei library and transports them to a magical world full of dog-people and monsters, where a sacred spring that gives the world it's life

is failing and three factions are vying for control of it. So, naturally, characters from other worlds are summoned to help.



You're given a selection of a handful of heroes at the outset, each of whom is aligned with one of the three main factions (Kind-hearted Tamaki, hotheaded but earnest Setsuna, and stoic Shiki). You can unlock more heroes as you progress through the story mode, which presents you with a sizeable map full of battles to engage in. Most of these battles are optional, there to act as the game's 'Free Mode' which is otherwise missing and allow you to grind out materials and character cards (more on those later), but some, denoted by special icons, are core story missions, hero missions, or dramatic battles. Each of the story missions and dramatic battles must be unlocked by fulfilling certain conditions; since some of these

conditions require you to have not completed certain battles it becomes a bit of a branching path through the game's storyline, leading to multiple different endings. Repeated playthroughs, therefore, are a must, but thankfully your character advancement and materials / card collections carry over.



In battle, All-Stars is more or less the same Musou gameplay you'd expect: you control your hero and battle through hundreds of rank-and-file enemies, capturing bases and completing objectives, as well as occasionally squaring off against opposing heroes. Though the combat itself is rarely challenging, it's satisfying and empowering, but the greater challenge comes from the constant flow of mission objectives. Balancing a desire to control regions of the battlefield with the need to defeat key opponents, protect allies, and enact strategic plans can be tricky in the more difficult battles, which quickly become a battle more of time management than of combat skill. Whilst most objectives rotate through certain core themes, the way they're implemented on each of the game's sprawling maps remains interesting even after dozens of encounters, though some of the story missions and hero recruitment missions can get old when you're playing through the game for the fifth or sixth time.

"THOUGH THE COMBAT ITSELF IS RARELY CHALLENGING, IT'S SATISFYING AND EMPOWERING"

Differentiating All-Stars from its peers are the new party system, which gives you primary control of one hero but allows you to be accompanied by four more; these will fight alongside you under the AI's control, but can be swapped into combat for a while or called upon to trigger special moves, which range from basic attacks to longterm buffs and healing magics. There's also a new Musou Rush ability, which when triggered supercharges your character and magically makes hundreds of enemies spawn in all around them, waiting to be cut down.

A more consequential new mechanic is the introduction of the Bravery system. Your character starts each battle with 1 bravery, but can earn more by completing objectives and defeating opponents. Doing so is crucial: opposing heroes also have bravery ratings, and if you're fighting an enemy with a much higher bravery rating than you they'll inflict a lot more damage with their attacks, whilst your own abilities will inflict much less. It's a clever way of encouraging you to follow the mission objectives and complete side goals, rather than just letting you charge straight at the enemy commander and down them with a special attack (which is totally not something I've done in other Warriors games, honest).



Outside of battle, collecting and upgrading weapons is a thing of the past, partly due to the fact that some of the game's character's don't use any weapons. Instead you now have character cards that can be equipped to their respective characters; these cards confer basic damage boosts and add elemental damage, but can be upgraded to include special skills and abilities by using materials gathered in battle.

As for the characters themselves, whilst they represent a good cross-section of Tecmo's library, there are a few questionable choices and some characters that are notable for their absence. One of Warriors Orochi's endearing features was the presence of 'guest characters' such as Sophitia from the Soul Blade franchise, but there are no such inclusions here, nor are there characters from outside Tecmo Koei published games, so don't expect to see heroes even from Omega Force games that aren't published by Tecmo - there are no Hyrule Warriors, Dragon Quest Heroes or Berserk cameos, for example. Whilst this is likely due to licensing issues, it's a shame these games don't have any representation in the All-Stars lineup, and makes this feel more like a Tecmo Koei All-Stars than a Warriors All-Stars.

So who do you get? Most of Tecmo's core franchises are represented with characters from Dynasty

Warriors, Samurai Warriors, Dead or Alive, Ninja Gaiden, Toukiden, Deception and Atelier all turning up in various numbers, but there are a few curios to add to the bunch - Nights of Azure's Arnice and Samurai Cat's Nobunyaga Oda are a bit unexpected, but more so are Opoona - the title character from an obscure Wii RPG - and Rio - a hostess character from a Pachinko series of games. The character choices aren't always the most obvious either - Dead or Alive gives us Kasumi, but also lesser-known DOA5 characters Honoka and Marie Rose, whilst the Dynasty Warriors selection stars fan-favourites Zhao Yun, Wang Yuanji and Lu Bu, but pairs them with previously unplayable Zhou Cang.



Warriors All-Stars boasts a cheerful, vibrant presentation full of lush colours and thematically appropriate music. The world the heroes are dragged to is similarly colourful, though stages representing other worlds (a Casino for Rio, a haunted forest for Toukiden, etc) are present and serve to keep things varied. The visuals are definitely a case of art style over technical prowess, but the game looks attractive enough and maintains a solid framerate even on a standard PS4.

Whilst Warriors All-Stars could more accurately be described as Tecmo Koei All-Stars, there's still plenty here to enjoy. The lack of game modes and complete absence of multiplayer are disappointing, and whilst the Story mode offers a ton of side content it doesn't quite measure up to the generous offerings Omega Force are known for. There are some neat new features, and like any crossover it's fun to see your favourite characters interacting with one another, but All-Stars still feels a little too tied to the core Musou mechanics and relies heavily on the player's affection for a cast of relatively unknown characters. That said, the basic gameplay is as entertaining and addictive as it's ever been, and even if All-Stars is just a stop-gap before the more radical changes coming in Dynasty Warriors 9, it's still a hell of a lot of fun.

8/10



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SALISS
GAMER GIRL

Photographer: Laughing Orc



What are you playing at the minute? I'm currently playing Life is Strange, I've only just started it really but so far so good. It's really more story based than anything else but definitely enjoyable.

How long have you been gaming? Since I was about ten! I wasn't allowed a console so I used to head round to my neighbours' house to play N64. I was, however, allowed to play Lemmings on the old computers in the house.

What's the first game that made an impression on you? Goldeneye on the N64. I think everyone will agree that I'm not alone in thinking that that is possibly the best game ever made, although I was quite disappointed to find out later in life that I didn't become a spy.

What's your platform of choice? Oddly, I'm really into PC gaming. A dying art in the UK, I know, but I enjoy it because it's much easier to update your graphics card to get the most aesthetically pleasing games.

SALISS *GAMER GIRL*

Photographer: Laughing Orc





How do you prefer to game? Sitting on my feet on my big comfy computer chair chugging coffee (with sugar, of course) like it won't raise my heart rate.

If you could bring back any classic videogame / franchise, what would it be? Theme hospital. The guys with the big heads that you had to pop always made me giggle. It was simple to learn, very difficult to master, and really engaging.

You can make any one video game character real for a day. Who would you choose and what would you do with them? Two words: Lara Croft. I'd absolutely love to meet a chick who's that tough and self sufficient. Hopefully she could give me some gymnastic lessons. Hello backflip.



SALISS
GAMER GIRL



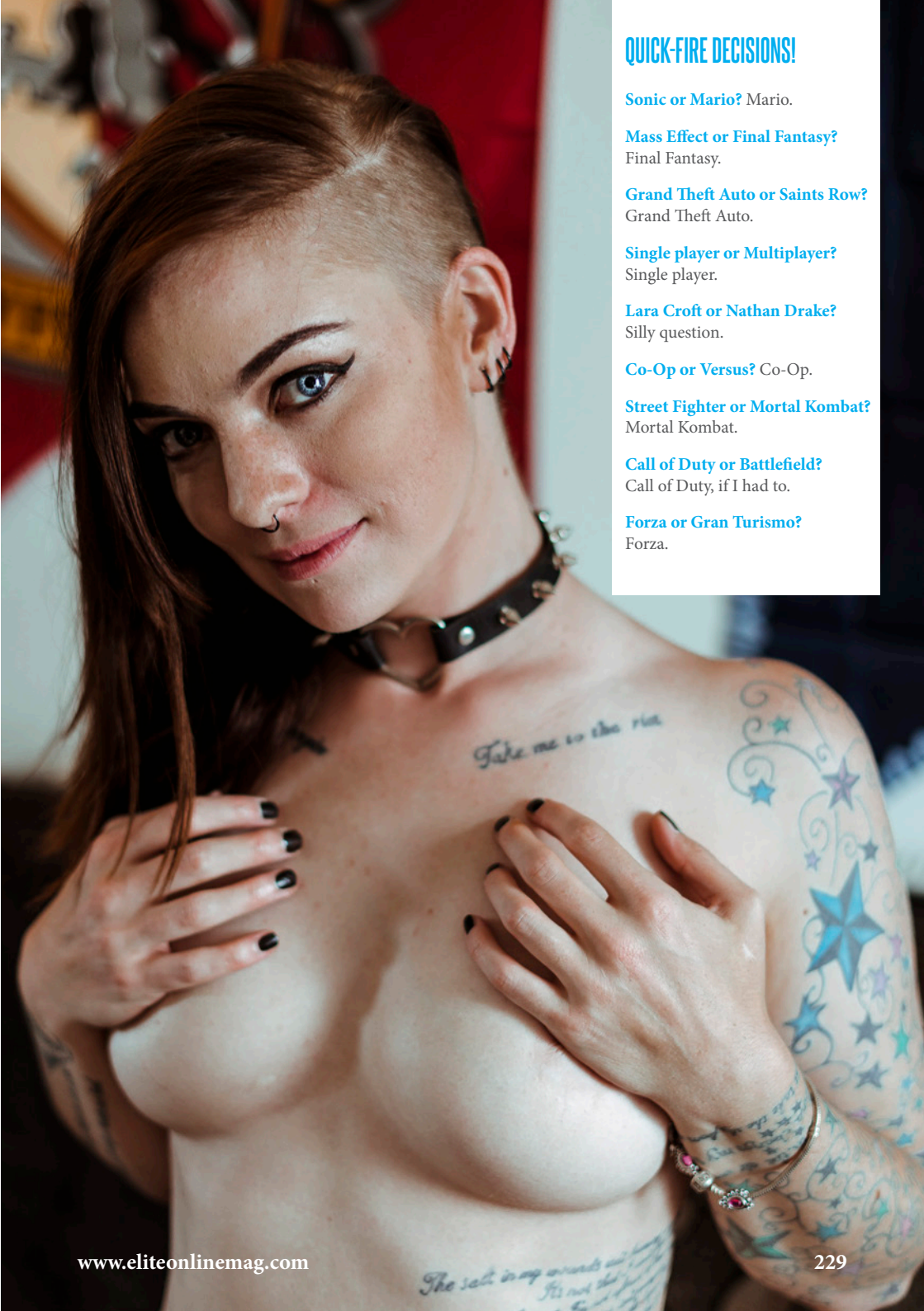
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MEETS SILENT HILL.

SALISS
GAMER GIRL

Photographer: Laughing Orc



SALISS
GAMER GIRL



QUICK-FIRE DECISIONS!

Sonic or Mario? Mario.

Mass Effect or Final Fantasy?
Final Fantasy.

Grand Theft Auto or Saints Row?
Grand Theft Auto.

Single player or Multiplayer?
Single player.

Lara Croft or Nathan Drake?
Silly question.

Co-Op or Versus? Co-Op.

Street Fighter or Mortal Kombat?
Mortal Kombat.

Call of Duty or Battlefield?
Call of Duty, if I had to.

Forza or Gran Turismo?
Forza.

SALISS *GAMER GIRL*

Photographer: Laughing Orc

